The Resurrection and The Life Beyond

by David James Burrell, D. D.

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE BEYOND

BY

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TO

THE ELECT LADY

AND

HER CHILDREN

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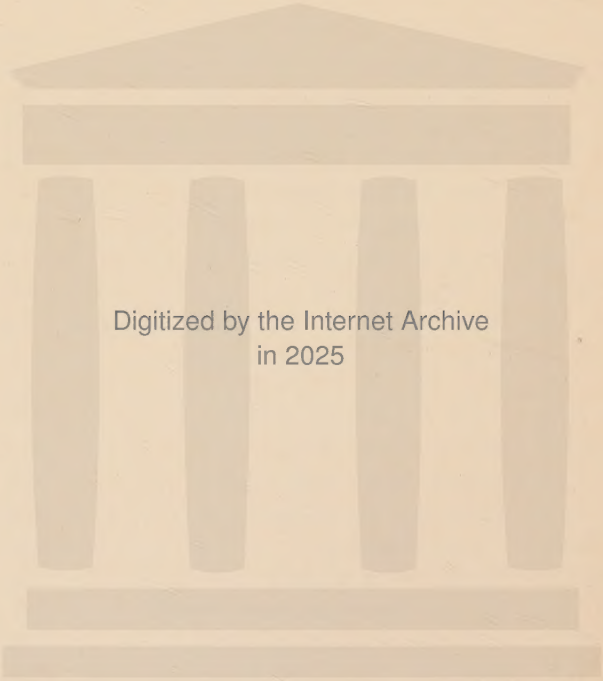
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I

THE SIGN

A MAN in homespun, one of the proletariat — a carpenter by trade, with no education but that of the village school — is going about as a teacher; and he teaches "as one having authority." Consider the presumption of it! And, marvellous to tell, the people throng to hear him.

Behold the unaccountable Man!

No other ever made such extraordinary claims. "I am the Light of the World," he says; "I am the Resurrection and the Life; I and my Father are one; No man cometh unto the Father but by me!"

Was it strange that the religious leaders demanded his credentials? "Whence," they asked, "is thine authority?" He answered, "From heaven." "Then," they

demanded, "give us a sign from heaven and we will believe thee."

He had indeed wrought "signs and wonders" among them. Every miracle of his was a sign of divine power. We do not say that he *claimed* to work these miracles; for they were accepted as undisputed facts. There are those among us who, at the safe distance of nineteen centuries, call them in question: but at that time there were too many witnesses — too many whose eyes had been opened, whose leprous scales had been wiped off, whose palsied limbs had been healed — to admit of any sort of denial or shadow of doubt.

The only question was, Whence did this Wonder-worker get his power? From above or beneath? Satanic influence was intimated. "No," said Jesus, "I can do nothing except as the Father is with me." "Then," said the rabbis, "let us see your commission; show us a sign!"

This was not so unreasonable as might appear. They had been looking for their Messiah for some thousands of years, and had been often deceived. One Christ after

another had led them out into a wilderness of futile hope; and now came this Carpenter of Nazareth, a root out of a dry ground, with no form or comeliness that they should desire him. Was it strange that they should question him?

Appearances were surely against him. He was not at all such a Messiah as they had expected to see. In their Roman vassalage they had long been looking for one like unto Moses who, with a voice of command and supernatural tokens of divine authority, should cry — "Let my people go!" Was not their insistence, then, most natural? And, for that matter, is not this sort of questioning common to every age?

> We walk at high noon, and the bells
> Call to a thousand oracles;
> But the sound deafens, and the light
> Is stronger than our dazzled sight;
> The letters of the sacred Book
> Glimmer and swim beneath our look;
> Still struggles in the age's breast
> With deepening agony of quest
> The old entreaty: 'Art thou he,
> Or look we for the Christ to be?'"

But he refused to give the required sign. Why? Because they already had signs enough; because they were so blinded by prejudice that no evidence could satisfy them; since

> "A man convinced against his will
> Is of the same opinion still."

He did, however, promise that a sign should presently be given them: namely, "the sign of the prophet Jonas"; that is, three days in the belly of hell and then life and immortality brought to light!

How runs the record? "The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it. . . . But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. . . . So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth

into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging. Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the belly of hell, and the Lord heard him. And the fish vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

Now a sign is something that signifies. What was the significance of this "sign of the prophet Jonas"?

It was intended, first of all, to be a verification of the claim of Jesus as our Prophet. He was our authoritative teacher in the great problems of the spiritual life. He touched all such problems with a fearless hand, insomuch that they said, "Never man spake like this Man." He spoke of a holy God, of sinful man, and of the reconciliation of man with God by faith in himself as the only begotten Son. And in all this he spoke as one having authority saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you."

This authority was repeatedly challenged by the religious leaders. Again and again

they demanded a sign; but the only sign he would give them was this "sign of the prophet Jonas." Wherefore if that fail what becomes of his authority? But if the sign make good — if he shall indeed triumph over death — what a demonstration it shall furnish of the fact that he was indeed "a teacher come from God"!

Next, it was intended to show the effectiveness of his work as our atoning Priest. He claimed that he was the antitype of all the sin-offerings of the Old Dispensation. He was to become a sacrifice, "offered once for all," so that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life. By virtue of that sacrifice of himself he claimed that he had power on earth to forgive sin.

And of this again the religious leaders required a sign; and again he would give them none but the sign of the prophet Jonas. If that fail, we are of all men most miserable; for if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins. But if he rise triumphant over death, then the Hallelujah Chorus is ours:

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Then in the third place it was intended to assure us of his supremacy as our King. Who is the mightiest of earth's mighties? The King of Terrors! Who may dispute with him? Can the power of wealth match his power? Or the power of earthly glory? Nay, Crœsus returns to dust.

> "Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
> May stop a hole to keep the wind away."

The power of armies and navies? The shores of the Seven Seas are littered with wrecked fleets and our hillsides are strewn with the dust of panoplied hosts. Who then shall dispute with Death? Pressing forward on his pale horse over prostrate hosts, he has the right of way. Beckoning to the gateway of the cemetery he laughs as he calls, "I gather them in!" The proudest of queens offers her kingdom for

an inch of time in vain. Fold her hands, cover her eyes; Death has claimed her for his own. "Fie! fie!" cries Cardinal Beaufort when told that he has but a moment to live, "Are my treasuries empty? Go bribe Death — bribe him!". . . Close the Cardinal's eyes and carry him out. Thus Death always conquers.

Always? Nay, not in Joseph's garden. Here Christ meets the King of Terrors and vanquishes him. In the darkness he rends his bands like green withes and comes forth with the shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

And into the fellowship of that triumph he invites his people. He follows with them after the bier of their loved ones and stands beside them at the open grave with the assurance, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die!"

He thus becomes the "firstborn among many brethren and the firstfruits of them"

that sleep in him. There is a world of meaning in that suggestion of the first-fruits. It calls up the picture of a Hebrew farmer scattering his wheat in the furrows, then guarding his fields against drought and mildew and the fowls of the air; watching for the first appearance of the green blade; praying always for the dews and the latter rains; hoping against hope, fearing yet expectant, until the fields are white unto the harvest; then going forth with sickle in hand, to reap one golden sheaf. That sheaf he brings to the Temple as a wave offering unto the Lord. It is offered both as a prayer and a prophecy: a prayer that God will continue to guard the growing fields, and a prophecy that the whole harvest shall ultimately be brought in. Meanwhile the great choirs of the Temple are sounding forth the festival chorus; but there is an undertone which only the farmer hears. In his fancy is the creaking of heavy wains as they bear the yellow harvest to the garners and the praise of households for their daily bread. This is the picture of Christ as the

firstfruits of the resurrection, waved before the altar of God.

In one of Huxley's essays he says it would have been foolish for Jesus to "risk all on the validity of one miracle"; nevertheless this is precisely what Jesus did. On the validity of that miracle he adventured his name, his character, the truth of his teaching, the success of his redemptive work, and the establishment of his kingdom on earth. Wherefore, if we take him at his word, everything depends upon it.

And the sign failed not. We speak of this resurrection as a demonstrated fact. If there are those who question it, let them recall the unchallenged statement of Paul that there were some hundreds of witnesses living in his time who had looked upon the risen Christ. And if they are still disposed to doubt, let them consult Greenleaf, the acknowledged authority as to Rules of Evidence, who says, "No event in history is more amply substantiated by competent testimony than the Resurrection of Christ."

It is granted that to overthrow the genuineness of this miracle would be to undermine the foundations of Christianity; for it is written, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . Ye are yet in your sins." And, by the same token, we insist that if this miracle be not overthrown, the religion of Christ is established as a triumphant fact, so firmly grounded that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In the giving of this sign we have conclusive proof, moreover, of our Lord's belief in the integrity and entire trustworthiness of the Scriptures as the Word of God. It is the fashion in some quarters to make light of the story of Jonah. They call it myth and folk-lore and a "fable"; but obviously Christ did not so regard it. On the contrary he, so to speak, underwrote its truth as the guaranty of his resurrection. We do not use fables as guaranties of fact. Suppose one were to try it in a court of justice: "As surely as Jason sought and found the golden fleece,

so surely will I tell the truth." That would scarcely answer. One must certify his testimony by an indubitable fact, like this: "As surely as there is a God in heaven I will tell the truth." Or suppose you try it in making out a promissory note: "By the sign of Jack and the Beanstalk, I promise to meet this obligation when it falls due." Does that seem grotesque? It is not a whit more so than to allege that Jesus referred to a fable when called upon to produce a sign in verification of his claim as the only begotten Son of God.

II

THE AUTHORITATIVE SEAL

IT is recorded that when the Chief Priests came to Pilate demanding that the sepulchre of Jesus be adequately secured "lest his disciples should come and steal him away," he answered, "Go make it as sure as you can." They went accordingly and "made sure" the sepulchre by stationing a guard around it and placing before it a massive stone whereon was affixed the Great Seal of the Empire.

The guard should have been sufficient; the massive stone would make assurance doubly sure; but the imposing Seal — who would dare to violate that? For it bore the image and superscription of Cæsar, with the golden eagle which symbolized the authority of Rome, the mightiest and proudest of Empires. To violate that Seal was death!

In his palace the Governor congratulated himself on being relieved of a heavy burden of responsibility. He had his doubts, indeed, as to the justice of the death sentence; but in any case the trouble-maker was disposed of.

In the Sanhedrim the rabbis smiled upon the success of their unscrupulous plans to overthrow the Nazarene. "Aha! He thought to strip us of our canonicals; but we have hung him up betwixt heaven and earth. We shall hear from him no more." Not that they were wholly without misgivings; for they recalled certain intimations of his, such as this: "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up." Vague and preposterous hints of a possible resurrection, no doubt; but they were taking no chances; wherefore they demand that the sepulchre "be made sure until the third day."

In the upper room at Mary's house, a group of sorrowful and affrighted disciples are mingling their tears. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel — and he is dead!" He

lies meanwhile in a rock-hewn sepulchre with his hands folded over his breast. The eyes that had looked on suffering with divine compassion are closed. The gracious lips that had spoken as never man spake are dumb. The feet that went about on errands of mercy are wrapped in red-stained cerecloth. Great-heart is dead!

Will these machinations of men prevail against the only begotten Son of God? Can they keep him down? Are the locks of this Samson now so shorn that he is become weak as other men?

Once on a time there lived a man named Cæsar, who led campaigns of undisputed conquest until at length he met the King of Terrors and lay down to die.

Once on a time there was a man named Alexander who dreamed of universal empire and, having realized his dream, met the King of Terrors and lay down to die.

Once on a time there was a man named Napoleon, at the waving of whose wand thrones and dynasties trembled and tottered to their fall; but he, too, met the King

of Terrors and, without a word, bowed low before him.

Once on a time there was a man who led the armies of our Republic to a victory scarcely paralleled in history; but he lies yonder in a mausoleum on the bank of the Hudson, with no more power than the "Amiable Child" who sleeps beneath a humble gravestone in the shadow of his splendid tomb.

When Schliemann was excavating among the ruins of Mycenæ he came upon the tomb of Agamemnon, who had been known as "the King of Men." There were three swords, a dented shield, a golden mask; all else was dust! *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Has the glory of Jesus of Nazareth passed thus away? The guard, the stone, the seal — behold how "sure" they have made his tomb!

And there he lies — under the seal. The hour of the prince of darkness is come. It is Rome against God.

Night! Night! The darkest night the world ever saw!

III

WOMEN WITH SPICES

THE heart went out of the disciples when Christ was crucified. John and the Marys stood on Calvary with their faces fallen upon their breasts. At the window of the upper room in Salome's house there were others who looked off toward the place of execution. They saw the strange darkness and then the returning light; they saw through tears the dark effigy of the cross against the sky. He whom they had expected to redeem Israel was dead.

"I go a-fishing," said Peter; and the others said, "We also go with thee." Why not? Their hopes were dashed; their Lord was in his grave.

In the early morning a group of women set out for Joseph's Garden with spices for the dead. One among them — Mary

the Magdalene — was broken-hearted; she had lost her best friend. He had spoken to her once as she passed along the streets, her garments bedraggled, her womanhood soiled, her soul torn asunder with remorse, saying, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." He had dispossessed her of the unclean spirit, and she loved him beyond all telling. But alas, he was dead!

On their way these women, perplexed and questioning, were saying to one another, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" And no wonder, for the stone was very great. Their eyes were downcast with weeping; yet with the unreasoning faith of loving women, they hurried on.

A great surprise awaited them.

IV

THE BREAK OF DAY

MEANWHILE, the night had been wearing on. The sentinels were pacing to and fro before the sepulchre. Suddenly, as first beams of morning were touching the shadows on the eastern hills, the ground began to tremble. A crash — the rocks are reeling and tottering! In a luminous cloud an angel with "a countenance like lightning and raiment white as snow" — Oh, fortunate angel! — descends from heaven, and touching the inviolable seal of Rome, crumbles it like a wafer! The stone is rolled away. The guards fall and lie prostrate as dead men. Then from the shining heights a troop of angels come gliding down; the Prince of Life issues from his tomb, wiping the death-dew from his brow; and they bear him aloft to resume "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was."

Listen, and you may hear antiphonal voices in the distant heavens: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in!"

The sign is fulfilled. Jonas is delivered from the belly of hell!

How did the Philistines learn that Samson was the unconquerable champion of Israel? They had shut him up within the gates of Gaza; they had fastened the bolts and compassed him about with guards; and lo, he arose at midnight and took the two gates and the posts thereof and carried them up to the hill of Hebron. At break of day his enemies saw him in the distance, leaning on their gates and bars, laughing at their discomfiture. It is a lesson on the redeeming power of God's only begotten Son.

Over the trans-Jordanic hills the light of the morning grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. The Messianic hope, for the fulfilment of which the whole world has been groaning and travailing together, is realized. The Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings.

V

"GO TELL PETER"

THE women enter Joseph's garden with heavy steps and heavier hearts. God's acre is a dreary place for those whose dead are imprisoned in its narrow cells. . . .

But what have we here? The dreaded stone is rolled away — angel lips speak angelic words. "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here! Come, see the place where the Lord lay; and go quickly and tell his disciples *and Peter* that he is risen from the dead!"

It is written that "they departed quickly." Aye, "they *did run* to bring his disciples word." The feet that were just now as heavy as lead are winged with joy.

When Christ was born men and angels joined their voices in the *Gloria in Excelsis;* but when he issued from his sepulchre

all went running to carry the news. The Marys and Peter and John, all of whom knew him with loving intimacy, ran to tell of his triumph over death and hell.

But the Magdalene still lingered in the garden. She stood weeping before the empty tomb. At the sound of a footstep behind her she turned; and seeing one — seeing dimly through her tears — whom she supposed to be the gardener, she said, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him." He called her by name, "Mary!" and she knew him and fell at his feet crying *Rabboni*, "my Master!" It was then she received her commission — the commission of all true believers — "Go to my brethren and say, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and unto my God and your God."

Meanwhile the other women were running to tell "the disciples *and Peter*." But why should Peter have thus been singled out? Why, unless he more than the others needed to learn the news?

The last time Peter had seen Jesus was in the Judgment Hall, where he thrice

denied him. And now, believing that the Friend whom he had so shamelessly renounced, was dead he was returning to his boats and nets. Why not? The foundations of his faith were gone; why should he not go a-fishing? What better was there to live for?

But as he was leaving the others, all were startled by the sudden appearance of the women, breathless, enthralled, Mary Magdalene leading.

"We have come from Jesus' tomb — we went there early to anoint his body — and lo, the sepulchre was empty! and a shining angel said to us, Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is not here. He is risen and goeth before you into Galilee!"

How the heavy heart of Peter must have leaped within him! Is it possible? Are you sure he said "*And Peter*"?

Jesus living! Jesus speaking of him! If this be true, it must mean two things: first, that his Lord has forgiven his denial; second, that the new life which he chose with the other disciples is a glorious reality. Life was worth living, after all!

The lesson is for all faint-hearted Christians of every era, and especially for just this present evil day. We are living in "a grand and awful time." But the clouds that hover over the world are not blacker than the night which enveloped the disciples after the tragedy of the Cross. In view of passing events the faint-hearted are saying: "My faith trembles! How could a gracious God permit these things to be? Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious? We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel; but instead, behold the lurid skies! We will therefore to our farms and our merchandise. As for our dream of Christian conquest, the bottom has fallen out of it."

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh! Be it known by these presents that our God is a great God — a God who holds the cyclones in his fist. He maketh even the wrath of men to praise him!

"The Lord our God, is clothed with might;
The winds obey his will;
He speaks, and in the heavenly height
The rolling sun stands still."

The keys of death and hell are at his girdle. By the power of his resurrection he speaks, as once he spoke out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Be still and know that I am God!"

If there ever was a time for believers to listen at the Oracles with their hands upon their mouths, that time is now. Let trembling Peters and doubting Thomases and recreant Demases observe how the fire and the whirlwind conspire with the still small Voice to exalt the majesty of the ever-living and conquering Son of God.

Go tell Peter that Christ by his resurrection has set the seal of divine approval on his power to save; so that even an unworthy backslider may turn and live. He is able to save even unto the uttermost all who will come unto him. Wherefore, return to the service of him you thought to be dead but who is alive and liveth forevermore. Back from your boats and nets to your calling as fishers of men!

The fifty days which intervened between

this announcement to Peter and the Pentecostal miracle were wonderful days for this man. His drooping spirits were so revived that Christ in the meantime became his all in all. Listen to him as he speaks to the multitude in an open court: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." And when, being pricked to the heart, his hearers cry, "What shall we do?" he encourages them to hope for salvation through him whom they with wicked hands had crucified, saying: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins: for the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off,

even as many as the Lord our God shall call." In other words, this risen Christ is the Saviour of all who will penitently and believingly come unto him.

Go tell Peter that the teaching of Christ is Yea and Amen. The sign of the prophet Jonas is fulfilled. The credentials of Jesus had been hypothecated on the fulfilment of that sign: so that had it failed he would inevitably have been pronounced an impostor and a charlatan; but being fulfilled, a voice from heaven rings along the centuries, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him!"

Go tell Peter that the Oracles are true. The prophecies concerning One who should redeem the world by plucking up sin — the envenomed sting of death — by its lowest roots, are fulfilled in Christ. "O fools," said Jesus in his conversation with two of his disciples on that very evening, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! *Ought not* Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?"

Is it not written that the Seed of the

woman shall bruise the serpent's head? Is it not written that God will not suffer his holy one to see corruption? Is it not written that his dew shall be as the dew of herbs?

Thus it is written and thus it must be. To your knees and to your Bibles, therefore, O followers of Christ! Be not taken up in the lips of talkers! The word of the Lord standeth forever! Not one jot or one tittle shall fail until all be brought to pass.

Go tell Peter that the work of witnessing for Christ is not in vain. The fishermen who were called to be fishers of men were not enlisted in a losing cause. They were not commissioned to follow the Cross as the emblem of a dead Christ; but of One who was dead and is alive and liveth forevermore; of One who said, "Lo, I am with you alway"; of One who leads his militant host on triumphant campaigns "even unto the end."

Go tell faint-hearted Peter that Christ's Kingdom is destined to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Tell him that the march of Progress now begins.

The Twelve who formed the nucleus of the Christian church were commissioned to go forth to the conquest of the world. At the close of the first century there were half a million who followed in their train; at the close of the fifth century, ten million; at the close of the fifteenth century, a hundred million; at the close of the eighteenth century, two hundred million; to-day there are five hundred million; and still the royal standards forward go!

It is related that Charlemagne was buried by his own command in a sitting posture, clothed in purple and ermine, crown upon his head and sceptre in hand. Long afterward his tomb was opened by the Emperor Otho; but alas, how little was left of the imperial glory! The crown had fallen from Charlemagne's bleached brow, his sceptre lay in the dust, his royal robes were scattered in rags about him. Not so with Jesus. He hath upon his vesture and his thigh a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." By his triumph over the King of Terrors he is set above all principalities and powers.

His triumph is assured "where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run."

Go tell Peter to watch and pray; for the Son of Man cometh in an hour that ye know not. The frequent intimations of Jesus as to his Second Advent were profoundly emphasized by his resurrection from the dead. The members of the early Church made more of it than we.

At break of day they did not say: "Good morning," but *Maranatha*, "the Lord cometh!" At nightfall they did not say: "Good night," but "The Lord cometh!"

And no one anticipated his appearing with a clearer hope than this same Peter, who, more than a quarter century after the Ascension, wrote to the churches concerning their own hope:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise. . . . Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."

A little earlier Peter also wrote: "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be

brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Go tell Peter that "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." The antithesis of faith is doubt; and all doubters are pessimists. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus when he said: "There shall be wars and rumors of wars; but the end is not yet." Lift up your eyes to the bright light! There is no room for quitters or slackers in the service of the risen and conquering Christ.

When Madame de Gasparin went through the burial crypts of Palermo, her faith for the moment forsook her. Walking amid the heaped-up bones of centuries, treading upon the dust of the multitudinous and forgotten dead, oppressed by the all-prevading mould and chill, she was moved to cry like the prophet in the Valley of Vision, "Can these slain live?" But as she came from the Catacombs into the sunshine, turning backward she saw above the archway *Jesu Nazaret, Rex Judæorum* — "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the whole Israel of God"; thereupon her

faith came back as in a sun-burst, flooding her heart with unutterable joy.

There are many Peters in these troublous times who say, "I go a-fishing." The message is for them. Let all such Little-Faiths turn back and go a-fishing for men. For in the light which the luminous shadow of the Cross casts over the empty sepulchre we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

O Morning of the Resurrection, break upon our souls, too often overwhelmed by sordid doubts and fears! Dawn upon the universal church, that it may go forth conquering and to conquer in the name of the risen Christ. Shine into the trysting places where we make our feeble prayers, and give us faith to realize that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Shine into our nights of sorrow that, looking up from the darkness of an open grave to the glory of the open heavens, we may praise him in whom life and immortality are brought to light!

Blessed be God for the morning of the resurrection. Oh, glorious sun!

VI

THE FORBIDDEN TOUCH

IT is a singular fact that the first words of Jesus after his resurrection were an apparent repulse of the affectionate approach of one who greatly loved him.

When Mary the Magdalene, finding that he was not dead as she had supposed, would have embraced his feet, he said "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.'"

How are we to understand that "Touch me not"?

It surely does not mean that there was any interruption of the friendly relation between Mary and her Saviour; for once a friend, he is always a friend; as it is written, "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end."

Nor does it mean that Mary was forbidden to touch him, had she only desired to touch him in the right way. The other women who had come with her to the sepulchre, on meeting Jesus had embraced his feet and worshipped him; nor were they rebuked for doing so.

Nor does it mean that there was anything singularly untouchable in the nature of his spiritual body. For that very evening he met his disciples in the upper room and because they were affrighted, supposing that they saw a spirit, he said: "Handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."

Nor does it mean that the demand for immediate service was so imperative as to forbid such an exuberant display of love. He did, indeed, require Mary to go posthaste with a message to his disciples; but he assigned a similar task to the other women, who were nevertheless permitted to embrace his feet. Love and obedience are never at odds in that way.

The explanation lies deeper; it must be found in the words, "for I am not yet

ascended." Here is a clear intimation that the ascension of Christ was to effect a change of some sort in the loving approach of those who followed him.

In his ministry he had a few devoted friends who were bound to him with bands of steel. There were the "three chosen," John and Peter and James, with the other disciples; his mother Mary and the "ministering women" who waited upon him; Lazarus and his two sisters at Bethany. But how spiritually comprehensive was their acquaintance with him? They "knew him after the flesh." They knew him as a man, as a wonderful man no doubt, even as an unaccountable man. But it was a long while before they perceived that he was the long-looked-for Messiah and were willing to so acknowledge him. It was not until in the closing months of his ministry, just before his Transfiguration, that in answer to his question, "Whom say ye that I am?" the response came from Peter, in the nature of a great discovery: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" But never,

in all the years of their earthly intercourse with him, had they really grasped the tremendous fact that he was the veritable, coequal Son of God.

The common name by which they addressed him was Rabboni, that is, "My Master." It was like the German *du;* the ring of deepest love was in it. On the night when Judas betrayed his Lord in the garden he approached him crying, "Rabboni," and kissed him.

That was the last time the familiar name was addressed to him before his crucifixion; the next was when Mary cried "Rabboni" at the open sepulchre. Her touch and that name were alike in their expression of a distinctly human relationship, the time for which had now passed by.

It will be remembered how once, when the disciples were overtaken by a storm on the sea of Galilee, their faith was frightened away. Had Jesus been with them in the little boat they would doubtless have appealed to him with all confidence. But he was on a mountain three miles away. They could not believe in

the omnipotence of their unseen Friend at such a distance, because as yet they knew him only "after the flesh." Their faith was thus confined within the circumscription of their finger tips. They had yet to learn the blessedness of those who can say of Jesus, "whom, not having seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They knew him precisely as we know each other, in the bonds of a loving but earthly attachment; so that, as yet, everything depended on his physical presence with them.

Of all the devoted friends of Jesus there was none more gratefully attached to him than the Magdalene. He had healed her of a desperate malady, and she never forgot it. She ministered to him, followed him and waited upon him. He was her dearest friend; and when they hung him up betwixt heaven and earth she lingered there after the other disciples had forsaken him and fled. She was one of those who removed his body from the cross and prepared it for burial. She was with

the other women who went with spices to Joseph's garden "early, when it began to dawn." Her dearest friend was dead; and never was sorrow like unto her sorrow.

It was she to whom the angels said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She answered, "They have taken away my Lord"; and when turning she saw Christ himself-she did not recognize him. (Alas, how often is our vision thus dimmed by our tears!) It was only when he called her by name that she cried, "Rabboni!" and would have embraced his feet. And it was then that he said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended."

In all this how obvious is the blindness of Mary! She had lost her Lord because they had taken away his body. The uselessness of the very spices which she had brought to the sepulchre should have suggested the stupendous change which the resurrection of Christ had wrought in her relations with him.

Blind, blind that we are in all our earthly loves! We go to the cemeteries to find

our dead and behold they are not there! We plant flowers on their graves and water them with tears, forgetful of their translation to the skies. Of all the disciples, this Mary of Magdala had most to learn concerning Christ. And her lesson was in this "Touch me not!"

The life of Jesus is in four chapters. First, the long chapter of the glory which he had had with the Father before the world was; second, the brief chapter of thirty years when he dwelt among us; third, the parenthesis of forty days between his resurrection and his ascension, during which he marked out the Plan of the Campaign which was to eventuate in the Golden Age, and fourth, the long chapter of his reign in glory unapproachable (1 Tim. 6:16). This last began with his ascension, which marked the end of his earthly life as a Man among men. Thenceforth as the God-man sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, he was to be knit to his ransomed in an omnipresent and omnipotent friendship as far above all merely human friendships as the infinite is above

the finite; more loving, more helpful and more eternally real.

It was during these forty days that he sought to teach his disciples some of the more sublimated truths of the Gospel, such as could only be taught in the light of his resurrection and must be taught before his ascension if at all. So long as our attachment to Christ is like Mary's, subject to the limitations of earthly companionship, we cannot attain to these spiritual heights; for "the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit lusteth against the flesh."

The lesson that Jesus thus taught Mary of Magdala is a lesson for us. The old things of his earthly life had passed away. The work which he had come to do was "finished"; and at his ascension every experience of his in fellowship with his disciples was to be translated into the terms of spiritual life. No more would he lead them on weary itineraries in Galilee, but from his high place in heaven he would lead them to the conquest of the world. No more would he converse with them in the rude vernacular of men, but in dreams

and visions and still small voices in the watches of the night. No more would he partake with them of frugal banquets in the upper room, but of a feast of fat things and wine upon the lees in trysting places where the eyes of the soul are open to the glory of the living God!

Oh, no; there is no interruption of our friendship due to the fact that we cannot touch him with fleshly hands or see him with these eyes. The new relation to which Jesus invited Mary in the words, "Touch me not," is a friendship far closer and more wonderful than she had ever dreamed of. Listen to Paul: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh; yet now henceforth know we him no more." To know him after the spirit is to enter into an immeasurably more intimate and blessed acquaintance with him.

It is not surprising that John the Evangelist was stunned and bewildered by his vision of Jesus walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, girt with a golden girdle, seven stars in his right hand, his face shining as the sun shineth in its

strength, and his voice like the sound of many waters. So great was the transformation that he could scarcely believe that this was the veritable Jesus whom he had known; he could only describe him as "one like unto the Son of man." So great was the glory that he says, "I fell at his feet as dead." And then John continues, "He laid his right hand upon me and said, 'Fear not; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.'" Ah, who knew better than John the touch of that right hand? He had dwelt in the secret place of his Lord's affection; had lain with his head upon the Master's breast; but here was something sweeter far for it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

There is to be a new and mutual touch. He that hath entered into the holiest by a new and living way can still be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"; and coming thus into vital and sympathetic

union with him, a divine virtue shall ever more and more pass from him into us.

There is to be a new name, also; a name beyond "Rabboni" or any other term of human endearment, a name which will justly recognize the distance betwixt man and God and, by the same token, emphasize the nearness and completeness of the life that is "hid with Christ in God."

The young ruler who addressed Jesus as Rabboni, that is to say, "Good Master," was reproved for doing so. The Lord will not be approached as a mere man, as a mere earthly teacher, as a mere exemplar for the conduct of the life that now is. "Rabboni" falls short of his present glory; for he hath now upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

We conclude that the words of Jesus, "Touch me not," so far from repelling the friendly overtures of Mary, were an invitation to a more spiritual and therefore a nearer approach; an approach with less of the human and more of the divine in it. The clear call to reverence in our drawing

near to Christ intensifies the fervor of our love toward him. True, it is no longer the affection of equals, but the priceless devotion of a soul to a Saviour whose almightiness is pledged to unquenchable love. The time will come when we shall know him by his new name and drink with him of the new wine in his kingdom.

> "Oh, the delightful day will come
> When my dear Lord will call me home,
> And I shall see his face.
> There with my Saviour, brother, friend,
> A blest eternity I'll spend
> Triumphant in his grace."

Not long ago a friend of mine said that he longed to go to Palestine to get "local color in his religion." It is not local color that we want in our religion, but the clear color of the Heaven above us. It was "local color" that sent the Crusaders out on their vain campaigns for the recovery of an empty sepulchre. It is "local color" that elevates the Mass and emphasizes "the real Presence" in the sacrament; as if the real presence could be literalized in a wafer! Let our children sing, "I wish

that his hands had been placed on my head, that his arms had been thrown around me"; but we have attended the school of the Master long enough to put away childish things. Instead of lamenting the loss of a physical hand-clasp, let us rejoice in the larger and more wonderful friendship which is opened up in "the glorious Gospel of the happy God."

It is said that the ancient city of Troy had three gates, on the first of which was written, "Be bold!" on the second, "Be bold!" and on the third, "Be not too bold!" Let us be bold, beloved, in our approach to the ascended Christ because of the length and breadth and depth and height of his love immeasurable. Let us be bold, because of his exceeding great and precious promises and his assurance, "It is I; be not afraid!" But let us not be too bold, because at best we are sinners saved by grace while he is evermore very God of very God.

VII

IN THE UPPER ROOM

IT was eight o'clock in the evening of the First Day of the week. The disciples had come together in their customary place of meeting, the upper room of the house of the widow Mary in Jerusalem. The attendance was small. Had the roll been called, the response would have been somewhat as follows:

ANDREW: "Present."

PETER: "Absent — gone a-fishing."

JAMES: "Present."

JOHN: "Absent; gone a-fishing with Peter."

PHILIP, BARTHOLOMEW, MATTHEW the Publican and JUDE, all: "Present."

JUDAS ISCARIOT: "Absent; gone to his own place."

SIMON the Zealot: "Present."

JAMES the Less: "Present."

THOMAS: "Absent — in the doldrums."

It thus appears that only eight of the disciples were there, besides Nicodemus, probably, and Joseph of Arimathea with some of the ministering women. And they were met behind closed doors. Why so?

To begin with, because of the great sorrow which had befallen them. Jesus was dead! The place was like your own home on that ever-to-be-remembered day when you came back from the funeral. The crape had been removed from the door, but it still hung over your hearts like a pall. "Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still." The cheerless room was full of memories. The door was closed against intruders. Your kind-hearted neighbors would fain have dropped in to comfort you, but you preferred to be left alone for a while. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy."

We are told, moreover, that the doors of the upper room were closed "for fear." The clang of Roman steel was in the outer air and the threatenings of the Sanhedrim

had gone forth against all who were of "that Way." The disciples were in no mood for martyrdom. The time was drawing near when they would venture forth from this upper room with brave hearts to face all opposition; but as yet they were not prepared to drink their Master's bitter cup or be baptised with his red baptism. Blame them not for lacking courage to "climb the steep ascent to heaven mid peril, toil and pain." They loved life; and there was no telling who might next be haled to judgment.

But there was another reason why they met behind closed doors. There was something back of their fear, namely, unbelief. They thought of their Master only as one crucified. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were there to assure them that the day before yesterday when they took the body of Jesus from the cross his eyes were closed and his throbbing heart had ceased to beat. Had they known the Scriptures or recalled the words of the Lord himself they would have understood that death could have no dominion over him. But

they had forgotten the old-time prophecy, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." They had forgotten the story of Jonah and Christ's prophetic interpretation of it. They had forgotten his valedictory, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." Sorrow, cowardice, and doubt had cut the sinews of their strength. They conjured up a thousand terrors because the King of Terrors controlled them. They were like Mistrust and Timorous who stood trembling on the road to the Palace Beautiful because "there were lions in the way."

A knock at the door! Their faces are blanched and their hearts stand still. A voice is heard calling for admittance. It is the voice of Mary the Magdalene. The door is opened; she enters and again breathlessly tells her story. "I went to the sepulchre this morning with Joanna and Mary the mother of Jesus; and behold, the stone was rolled away and the grave was empty! And we saw a vision

of angels who said, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? Christ is not here; he is risen! Go tell his disciples that he goeth before them into Galilee and there shall they see him.' The other women ran with their message, but I remained at the tomb weeping. There was a footfall behind me and seeing dimly through my tears, I supposed it to be the gardener; I said, 'Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him!' Then Jesus, for it was he, called me by name, and I fell at his feet, crying, 'My Master!' He bade me make haste and say to you — 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and unto my God and your God.'" A hush of awe fell upon the room. Yet even then, the disciples believed her not, so wholly was their faith obscured by the dark sorrow that had befallen them.

Another knock at the door, and a voice calling. It is the voice of Peter. He enters and tells his story: "I set out in company with John this morning, as you know, to go a-fishing. What better could we do, since Jesus was dead? But we had

not gone far before Mary and the Mother of James, and Joanna with them, came running to say that they had been at the sepulchre, where they saw a vision of angels who said that Jesus was risen from the dead! We turned straightway and ran — how we ran! — to Joseph's garden to find out for ourselves. I entered the tomb first, then John; and it was even as the women had said: the grave-clothes were there and the napkin which had been around his head, folded and laid carefully aside — how like the Lord that was! — but him we saw not." — What were his hearers to think? Yet the cloud hovered over them. Still they wondered — and doubted. Doubt is the stubbornest thing in this world of ours.

Again a knock at the door and a voice calling. It is the voice of Cleopas, who enters and tells his story: "I was on my way this afternoon to the village of Emmaus with a friend, and our hearts were bowed down. A traveller caught up with us who asked why we seemed so sad. We told him of what had befallen us: how

our best friend, Jesus, who we had hoped was to redeem Israel, had been put to a shameful death. He said, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' Then he opened unto us the Scriptures and showed us how this resurrection was written all through its glowing pages: and our hearts burned within us while he talked with us thus along the way. On reaching the village we entreated him to come in and abide with us; and as we sat at table he rose to break the bread and, behold, we saw the print of the nails in his hands! Our eyes were opened and we knew him; and straightway he vanished out of our sight." Still the disciples believed not. Alas for the dullness of their hearts and ours!

On a sudden another Presence was there; but there was no knock, no open-flung door. Jesus himself stood in their midst with uplifted hands, saying as they had so often heard him before, "Peace be unto you."

Do you ask how he could enter when the doors were closed. Tell me how his dead body was quickened in the darkness of the tomb: tell me how the silent heart began to beat: tell me how a cold hand was lifted to unwind the napkin about his head: tell me how this man was very God; and I will explain all. Meanwhile it is sufficient to say, here he is; and his promise is, "Lo, I am with you alway."

Were the disciples convinced by his visible presence among them? Not at all. "They were terrified and affrighted, supposing that they saw a spectre." He said, "Why are ye troubled? Behold my hands and my feet. Handle me and see that it is I myself." While they yet "believed not for joy, and wondered," he said, "Have ye here any meat?" and sitting down he ate before them. After that he opened unto them the Scriptures, saying, "Thus it is written; and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations: and ye are witnesses of these things."

I wish I had been present at that meeting in the upper room. A great blessing must have come to those who attended it. As long as they lived they would never forget the wonders of that blessed night.

The interchange of fellowship was there. This is of itself an unspeakable blessing. The social instinct is common to our race. We are made to flock together like sheep. We gather in congenial groups, each group after its kind. This is why bachelors are seen going to their clubs, handicraftsmen to their guilds, freemasons to their lodges. "Birds of a feather flock together." It is a true saying, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the face of his friend." An anchorite's life is abnormal. No matter how conceited a man may be, he usually likes another's company better than his own.

But this social instinct is not sufficient to account for the delights of the upper room. Our Lord refers to a mystic union between himself and his Father, saying, "I and my Father are one." He intimates that there is a like union between himself and his people, as set forth in the parable

of the Vine and its Branches. Still further, he speaks of his people as bound to each other in a singular oneness. Thus in his sacramental prayer he says: "I pray for them, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee; that the world may know that thou hast sent me." Here is a bond closer than consanguinity; and by its manifestation in our Christian assemblages the church finds its utmost usefulness; for scattered fagots, flaming to no purpose, when united make a conflagration. He who holds himself aloof from this goodly fellowship, falls short of the largest possibilities of his spiritual life. John and Peter and James when apart were merely three units, but heart to heart they were decimally multiplied. All who gathered in that upper room were thus mutually stimulated in their Christian life.

But Thomas was not there.

No doubt he had an excuse, as everybody has in like circumstances. In any case the fact remains, that whatever of blessing was to be found in Christian association at that time, he missed it.

Those who attended this historic meeting had also the advantage of mutual conference on matters of vital importance. Malachi, writing of a period of spiritual declension, says, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name."

No doubt the theme of conversation in the upper room was Christ. Only a few days before, in this very place he had bidden them farewell. "Do you remember," they are saying, "how tenderly and affectionately he spoke with us?" Do you remember this, and do you remember that? But their interest converged on Christ as revealed in the Scriptures; for the two disciples who went with him to Emmaus had told them how he, beginning at Moses and the prophets, had "expounded unto them the things concerning himself." They recalled, no doubt, his reference to the protevangel, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's

head"; and to the prophecy of Moses respecting One greater than himself; and to the words of Isaiah concerning him as a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who should be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that by his stripes we might be healed; and to many other predictions concerning his life and suffering and death. It is safe to say that thenceforth the Bible was a new book to them; to be read as when one travelling a familiar road discovers new flowers blooming all along the way.

But Thomas was not there.

And these Scriptures would still be to him as if written in an unknown tongue. God promised to reveal truth to Israel at "the Tabernacle of Meeting"; nor can the most intense devotion of study by the light of midnight oil compensate for the loss of such insights, revelations, and outlooks as are reserved for those who come together with one accord in one place.

Observe, also, the advantage of united prayer. Much is to be said for supplication in the trysting place. "Enter into

thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." But there is a special and particular promise to such as mingle their prayers: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

That was mighty supplication which John Knox offered in the solitude: "O God, give me Scotland or I die!" but who shall estimate the prevailing power of the Covenanters gathered in their conventicles among the moors, and pleading all night for Scotland? The mists at daybreak rising before the sun were not so real or so impressive as the volume of their united petitions ascending to God. So it was with these disciples in the upper room.

But Thomas was not there.

Great was his loss. He may have been

praying alone; but the blessing reaped in solitude was not to be compared with that which awaited him by Christ's promise and appointment in this gathering of the chosen ones.

But for that assembled company there was a greater blessing than any of the foregoing, in the personal presence of Jesus. He entered and stood in their midst. The disciples might have anticipated this; for had he not promised that he would be "in the midst of them"? It is true that Christ is everywhere, by virtue of his omnipresence; but he has promised to manifest himself in a peculiar manner to his people when they are come together to honor him.

If I were authorized to announce today that Jesus would be physically present at some one of our mid-week meetings, it is safe to say that no auditorium would be large enough to hold the crowd that would assemble to welcome him. No doubt some would deliberately absent themselves; for not all are desirous of seeing Christ. Up to the time when Adam

sinned he found his greatest pleasure in walking with God in the cool of the day; but afterwards, on hearing the voice of God in the garden, he "was ashamed and hid himself." So those who are at odds with the Saviour would prefer not to meet him. But his friends would be there. Some who are burdened with age and bedridden, would insist upon being carried on stretchers that their filming eyes might gaze upon him. Mothers who have long been telling their children of the beauty of his face, would take them to behold him. What a host would assemble, and with what unspeakable joy! In fact, however, we have precisely such an appointment as that each Wednesday night; and the Lord has promised in terms clear and unmistakable to be present at that time and commune with those who care to meet him.

To those who gathered in the upper room he appeared, despite the fact that the doors were closed. What are bolts and bars to Christ when he would keep an appointment?

But Thomas was not there.

So his promised blessing went by default because he had not put himself in the way to receive it.

There was the benefit, moreover, of the Lord's benediction, "Peace be unto you." The disciples were in great trouble; and this must have been as a healing balm to their souls. They had parted with Jesus three days before at the gate of Gethsemane, where "they all forsook him and fled." Since then, how much had happened! — the scourge, the buffeting in the judgment hall, the crown of thorns, the bearing of the cross, the bitter death! They had lain awake and seen the agonized face of Jesus during the watches of the night. Theirs was a bereavement which seemed beyond all comfort. But behold how he calms their troubled souls with a word, as when he bade the tempest be still.

But Thomas was not there!

Wherefore his sorrow remained with him. How many needless griefs we carry because we will not come where Christ may lay his peace upon us!

And consider how the faith of the disciples was fortified that day. The record says, "He showed them his hands and his side; *then were they glad.*" Well might they be glad; for in this triumphant Christ, life and immortality are brought to light. He that was dead liveth and is alive forevermore!

We often wish that our dead, whom we have followed with tears to the borderland, could return and tell us of what lies beyond. One and one only who has thus passed through the portals of eternity can and does return to enlighten us. In that upper room Christ and his gospel were vindicated. The disciples had been given over to doubt, wondering, questioning, hoping against hope; but their doubts were now scattered to the winds, so that each might say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

And Thomas was not there!

He had the opportunity of assuring himself, but did not embrace it; and here he is,

pilloried in the story of the centuries as "doubting Thomas." We hear much of "honest doubt"; but let no man assert that his doubt is honest unless he has taken all possible measures to dispel it. The crucial test of honest doubt is an agony to get rid of it.

And finally, the disciples, in that upper room, received again their great Commission and with it a corresponding equipment. The Lord had previously commissioned them, in this very room; but after his death they seemed to forget it. One said, "I go a-fishing"; and another, "I also go with thee." They had hoped that Jesus would establish a kingdom; but the king was dead and his kingdom a vanished castle in the air. In such a total eclipse of faith, what was there to do but quit? . . . Quit? Nay, the King is here! — here, with the glory of the resurrection in his face; and he renews their Commission: "As the Father sent me into the world, even so send I you"; and thereupon he breathed on them saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" Here, indeed, is replenish-

ment of power. "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth; go ye, therefore, and preach the evangel and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!" Surely they can never lose heart again, after such a vision of the living and triumphant Captain of their Salvation and after having been thus armed and panoplied for service.

But alas, Thomas was not there.

In vain did his comrades dwell on the things that had happened in the upper room. His soul was torn by conflicting emotions of doubt and sorrow. He would take nothing on hearsay. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe!"

There are many Christians who, thus failing to use their opportunity of communion with Christ, go bearing their burdens alone; doubting because they have not taken occasion to relieve their doubts, and weeping under the Cross because they have not gone forth to meet the risen Christ.

The lesson is plain. He that would be blest must put himself in the way of blessing; as did blind Bartimeus, when he heard the footsteps of the multitude and learned that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. We have none but ourselves to blame for barrenness of soul.

A student in Princeton Seminary once came to Dr. Charles Hodge saying, "I am greatly troubled with doubts as to the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel. Will you go over with me the arguments for the Being of God, and Immortality, and the Atonement, and the Personality of the Spirit?" His instructor answered, "It isn't argument that you want, my young friend, but a closer touch with Christ. Get into the fellowship of service; thrust your sickle into the harvest; learn the joy of growing weary in duty; and your doubts will pass."

It was wise counsel. The way of duty is the way of blessing. Now it comes to us in the closet and again at the Tabernacle of Meeting. Neglect not the hour of secret prayer; neither forsake the as-

sembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is (Heb. 10:25). Life is too short for people made in God's likeness and journeying to eternity to lose any opportunity of receiving a blessing. My friend, keep close to Christ; and wherever Christ may be, be there to meet him.

VIII

A WEEK LATER

IT was "an eight days after" when the disciples were again assembled in the same place.

And Thomas was there.

He is called doubting Thomas because, even on sufficient evidence, he refused to believe in the risen Christ. The testimony of many eye-witnesses did not convince him. "I will not believe," were his words, "except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails."

What he demanded was "scientific proof," i.e., the evidence of his physical senses. Foolish man! It is the merest modicum of things that can be verified by touch and eyesight. Let the man who speaks like Thomas ask himself why he believes in the dawn of tomorrow or in the other side of the world or even in the reality of life. To shut out all that lies beyond the horizon of our physical senses

would be to be imprisoned in a seven-by-nine cell forever and ever. This is impossible. Man was not made for physical sense alone. Whether we will or no, we walk by faith — that sixth sense — which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It opens the door out of a narrow world such as brutes were made to dwell in, and bids us enter upon a universe wide and high as truth itself, and worthy of a man made in the likeness of God.

O fools and slow of heart to believe! Who are we to cast a stone at Thomas so long as his poor, blinking philosophy of the seen and tangible is a mist that hangs before our own eyes? We are of the earth, earthy: earthy because we love our delusion. We spend our lives in cockle shells, cruising along the shores of an inland sea while faith beckons us beyond the Pillars of Hercules to where the Eldorados of a boundless universe await us. Come, Holy Spirit, come! Come from the four winds, O God, and breathe upon the fluttering canvas of our souls, that we, being willing in

the day of thy power, may venture forth upon the freedom of the seas!

What would become of us were it not for the long-suffering of God? Blessed be his name; he "remembereth that we are dust"; wherefore he bows the heavens and comes down to us.

And Jesus said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing." Behold now the doubter at his Master's feet, prostrate as a prisoner of hope. Listen to his cry of utter and unconditional surrender, "My Lord and my God!"

But the end is not yet. The Master has something more to say: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed!" Here is the benediction of those who, never having laid eyes upon the visible Christ, "yet believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Oh, to be great believers! This is possible — but possible only for those who yield themselves to the guidance of the unseen Spirit of the living God.

IX

THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

As Illustrated in the Conversion of Paul

THE most important event in the opening century of the Christian era — apart from the crucifixion of Christ — was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

As chief inquisitor of the Sanhedrim he had been the outstanding figure in the persecution of the infant church. And strange to tell, he pursued his mission with a good conscience; as he says, "I verily thought I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." He was acting under the strict compulsion of duty when he "desired letters to the synagogues in Damascus" for the arrest and imprisonment of Christians there.

It was on this journey that the whole

tenor of his life and character was changed. "Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth." A moment later he arose another man — a new man in Christ Jesus! He was so thoroughly transformed that the things which he had previously loved he now "counted but loss," and the things which he had hated he now loved better than life. From that hour he was as fervid in following Christ as he had been zealous in denouncing him and in persecuting those who loved him.

By what power was this sudden transformation wrought? There is no effect without a cause. How are we to account for it?

One morning this man rode through the gateway of Jerusalem breathing out slaughter against the followers of Christ. At evening, some days later, he entered the gate of Damascus, led by the hand, blind, humbled, transformed; a follower of Christ forever. Explain that on natural grounds, if you can.

In the middle of the eighteenth century

Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, leaders among the infidels of that controversial age, came together to plan an assault upon Christianity. Each promised to prepare an elaborate and exhaustive attack on what he regarded as the most momentous and salient event of the Gospel record. West decided to write on the Resurrection of Christ; Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of Saul. A year later they came together to compare notes. The former said: "My essay is finished; but I have arrived at a far different conclusion from what I had anticipated. After a comprehensive survey of the evidence in the case I am forced to believe that Jesus did come forth from his sepulchre and thus proved himself to be the veritable Son of God." The latter said: "I am bound to admit that my researches have brought me to a similar conclusion. The evidence shows that Saul of Tarsus met with an extraordinary and otherwise unaccountable change on his way down to Damascus; that he saw the living Christ, and that this Christ was therefore what he claimed to be."

As a citizen of Jerusalem, and probably a member of the Sanhedrim, this man, Saul, had been familiar with the singular life of Jesus. He must have heard the common rumors of his wonderful words and miracles; but he shared in the opinion of his associates that Jesus was an impostor, setting himself up to be the Messiah, but with nothing to support his claim. The power of the wonderful life did not convince him.

He must have been familiar also with the circumstances attending the death of Jesus. It is more than possible that he himself had a voice in the council that passed the death sentence. To many minds the Cross is the great argument of the Gospel. The infidel Rousseau confessed that it baffled him: "If Socrates died like a philosopher, then Jesus died like a God!" But Saul of Tarsus was proof against it. The power of the wonderful death did not convince him.

What, then, was it that turned him right about face? It was *the power of his resurrection.* He had supposed that Jesus

was dead and finally disposed of; but here on the Damascus highway a living voice called, "I am Jesus!" This voice, with the attendant circumstances, carried conviction which was instant and inevitable: "He whom I supposed to be dead is risen and alive! The story of the resurrection, which his followers have been telling far and wide, is no empty tale!" Now Saul was a logician. He was, indeed, the most distinguished controversialist of his time. He knew the force of an argument when he saw it. To this voice in the sunburst he could find no rational reply but immediate and unconditional surrender: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The power of Christ's wonderful life had been ineffective: the power of his wonderful death had been equally so, but the power of his resurrection was sufficient to change Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle. The thought of the living Christ became, then and there, the dynamic of all his plans and purposes; and from that hour on the Damascus highway up to the moment when his head fell from the block

beneath the walls of Rome, his constant ambition was to proclaim him and be like him.

Let us inquire as to the significance of this argument: the argument based on the resurrection of Christ as its postulate, which so profoundly influenced the character of this man.

First: It was to his mind a demonstration that Christ, by virtue of his indestructible life, was the only begotten Son of God.

The primal attribute of God is self-existence. He is not only the living God; he is the source and fountain of life. We "live and move and have our being in him"; he sits on no precarious throne nor borrows leave to be. His name Jehovah suggests pure, underived, essential, self-sustaining life. The same truth is involved in the name by which he declared himself at the burning bush, "I-am-that-I-am" or "I am because I am."

If Jesus would verify his claim to be the only begotten and coequal Son of God, he must show himself to be possessed of

this attribute. He said, "I am the life." He also said, "I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again"; in other words, life was his so surely that he could do what he pleased with it. When Pilate said, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?" his answer was, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee." If his life were taken from him it was because he chose to surrender it; and in that case he had "power to take it again." What a stupendous claim! No mortal man could make it. If he can prove that assertion, he will vindicate his Godhood. Can he prove it?

Second: While his resurrection furnished evidence beyond all controversy that he was himself possessed of this divine attribute, it remained for him to demonstrate that he was able to confer of his abounding resources of spiritual life upon those who believed in him. He claimed this, saying, "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." And again, "This is the will of

him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Now spiritual death is the immediate result of sin; therefore, if Christ is to show himself the life-giver, he must make it clear that he has "power on earth to forgive sin."

All his miracles were directed toward this end. It was a matter of comparatively small import that he should heal a few lepers and blind men; but it was a matter of vast importance that by opening blind eyes he should demonstrate his power to clarify our spiritual vision, and that by wiping away the leper's spots he should demonstrate his ability to purify the soul. Now his resurrection was simply the culmination of all his miracles. It proved not only that he was the self-existent God, but that he was also the "quickening Spirit," able to restore spiritual life to those who were "dead under the law." Wherefore it is written, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

It is just here that the conversion of Paul yokes itself up with the resurrection of Christ. In telling over and over again the story of his conversion he presented himself as a living demonstration of the power of the risen Christ to confer spiritual and eternal life upon all and several who are willing to accept him.

And this is the great matter. It is the ultimate purpose of the whole redemption scheme; and therefore it is the end of all true preaching. The same Jesus who appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus highway and, by the power of his resurrection, turned him right about face, is able by the same power to save unto the uttermost all who will come unto him.

X

THE FIRST EASTER SERMON

TEN years have passed since the conversion of Saul of Tarsus; and the passing years have so deepened the impressions of that memorable event that the living Christ is now Christ living in him.

The scene is in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. At the further end stands a desk for the Master of the Synagogue, that is, the reader of the day. Above it is the women's gallery, where faces may be seen behind a partition of lattice-work. On the side of the room nearest Jerusalem is the ark or chest for the sacred scrolls. Seats for the worshippers are arranged according to station, those for the rabbis being nearest the reader's desk. As each attendant enters he casts a scarf over his shoulder, the sacred talith with its four tassels.

Among the worshippers on this particu-

lar day are two strangers. One of them is a man of imposing presence and benignant countenance, with clear, kindly eyes — a gracious man whom we know as Barnabas, or "the Son of Consolation." His companion is of smaller stature, described as a man "of mean presence," with stooping shoulders and defective sight. These two, being "in holy orders," have found their way to the rabbinical seats.

The service begins with a prayer recited by the reader or "angel of the Assembly." Then the Chazan brings from the ark the sacred scroll, from which is read the Scripture for the day; then singing from the Psalter, which was the Hebrew hymn-book. After that the service is thrown open, according to custom, to such as occupy the rabbinical seats. A special invitation is extended to the two strangers. "Men and brethren," says the leader, "if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

Paul rises and beckons with his hand. He is master of dialectics. In this beckoning with his hand we note an evidence of

his rhetorical skill. It is his first sermon. He has been familiar with forensic disputation in the Sanhedrim for years: but today he makes his maiden effort as a minister of the Gospel.

THE TEXT

He found his text in the sixteenth Psalm, which was probably the lesson of the day: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The title of this Psalm is *Michtam*, or "hiding." Christ hides here behind the lattice of a prophecy uttered a thousand years before the world saw him.

THE EXORDIUM

He began with an historical résumé, tracing the footsteps of Messiah from the Exodus to the Cross. The striking feature of this introduction is its resemblance to a speech which Paul had heard twelve years

before in the hall Gazith. He was at that time a member of the Sanhedrim. The deacon Stephen was summoned for trial. In making his defence he began with the call of Abraham, and followed the scarlet thread of Messianic prediction through the history of Israel until, overcome with indignation at the people's hardness of heart and casting prudence to the winds he cried out: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers!"

It is little wonder that the audience, cut to the heart, gnashed on him with their teeth and ran upon him with one accord. They cast him out beyond the city walls and stoned him. As he bowed his bruised and bleeding face before the storm of missiles, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" and again, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"

While this was taking place, the clothes of the ringleaders were held by young Saul of Tarsus, who today in the synagogue at Antioch preaches the gospel of Christ. His words are an echo of Stephen's — as if the voice of the protomartyr had fallen upon the sensitive plate of a phonograph to be kept and reproduced in due time; so true is it that, however the saints may rest from their labors, their words as well as their works do follow them.

This historical résumé of St. Paul, which brought him to the death and burial of Jesus, was concluded with the abrupt words, "But God raised him from the dead!" And he continued: "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.'"

THE ARGUMENT

In his statement of this proposition, observe how Paul begins with God. It is

impossible to proceed with the argument otherwise. For only upon the assumption of Omnipotence can we frame an antecedent probability or even possibility of a resurrection from the dead. But Paul's brain and conscience and heart were filled with the consciousness of God. His life was overarched by the truth of the divine presence. In his philosophy all things are of God and through God and for God.

Then having made the resurrection possible by he affirmation of almighty power, he reviews the Messianic prophecies. Three in particular are referred to: "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee" (Psa. 2:7); "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3); and "neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16:10).

This anticipation of Messiah's triumph over death was known as "the Hope of Israel." It lay in Scripture like Aaron's rod in the Ark of the Covenant; cut off from mother earth and from the parent stem, shut out from air and sunlight, yet

in fullness of time putting forth tokens of newness of life.

Men have always feared Death. They have called him the King of Terrors. They have seen him stalking through palace gates and bowing low to enter cottage doors. They have known that the time was coming when they — every one — must bow before him. This fear was relieved by the hope of the coming of One who by conquering sin would bind at his girdle the keys of Death and of Hell. He was to be the "death of Death and Hell's destruction." All humankind were in bondage under sin and in subjection unto death, like the garrison of a beleaguered city, gaunt and desperate, gazing wistfully afar off with one forlorn hope. The story of the bursting of the sepulchre in Joseph's garden was like a bugle-blast on the distant hills, the footfall of an army come for deliverance, the waving of banners to tell that One mightier than Death drew nigh to save his people. "We declare unto you glad tidings," said Paul, "how that the promise which was

made unto the fathers God hath fulfilled unto us!"

Observe, he does not undertake to prove the resurrection of Christ. The reason of this is obvious. It was beyond the necessity of proof. Had one risen in the assembly and cried, "I doubt it!" there were scores of witnesses who could be summoned to certify that they had seen Jesus alive after his crucifixion, had seen his scarred face and wounded hands, had talked with him, bowed under his benediction, and seen him vanish in the opening clouds of heaven. Scores? Ay, hundreds upon hundreds, for this thing was not done in a corner. He was seen "by above five hundred at once." We are nearly nineteen hundred years beyond the event; and yet the proofs are so striking that no fair-minded man will resist them. Dr. Arnold of Rugby, one of the profoundest students of history, said: "I do not know of any historical fact more substantially proved by cumulative evidence than the resurrection of Christ."

THE APPLICATION

The practical importance of this doctrine is set forth by Paul here, and more elaborately elsewhere, as a *sign and seal.*

(1) *It is a sign of the divinity of Jesus.* His enemies were continually clamoring for a sign. He professed to be their Messiah. "Show us a sign," they cried, "and we will believe thee." He answered, "There shall no sign be given but the sign of the prophet Jonas"; that is, three days in the heart of the earth and then a coming forth. On this miracle the Lord adventured all his Messianic claims and the integrity of his redemptive work. He showed himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead.

(2) *The miracle of his resurrection is also a seal of the covenant of life.* Because he liveth we shall live also. We stand gazing out towards an unknown world, bewildered, and asking, "If a man die, will he live again?" The fathers of old dreamed of life and immortality — dreamed and hoped and wondered; but since Christ has risen,

the shadows are gone; we dream no more. In him life and immortality are brought to light.

THE PERORATION

The sermon concludes with an impressive offer of salvation in the name of the risen Christ: "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." What further was there to say? He who conquered death is able to save unto the uttermost all who by faith will come unto him.

XI

THE PISGAH CHAPTER

THE truth of the Gospel stands or falls with the resurrection of Christ. This was affirmed by Christ himself, and is reiterated by Paul in his monumental argument addressed to the members of the Corinthian Church.

To the Christians of that city this doctrine was of supreme importance because of their many friends who had suffered martyrdom for their devotion to Christ. What had become of them? Had they passed through the gateway of death into glory of an endless life? And was there to be a reunion presently, a happy day of knitting severed friendships up?

All believed in immortality; but whether the souls of their beloved were to preserve their identity so as to be recognizable in heaven, that was another question. And

some of the half-hearted in Corinth had much to say against it.

It was this difference of opinion that called forth the wonderful "Pisgah Chapter," the fifteenth of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, the pith of which is contained in these words: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came

also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — And behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death

is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

The members of the Sanhedrim knew that the possible resurrection of Christ would present an irrefutable argument in favor of his utmost claims, and that on the contrary his failure to triumph over death would invalidate those claims, since he had based all his claims upon it. This was why they appealed to Pilate saying: "We remember that this deceiver said while he was yet alive, 'I will rise again'; command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure." It thus appears that the resurrection of Christ is the very citadel of our faith. So long as that holds out, the Gospel stands. Let that be reduced and everything is lost. If dynamite can be exploded under the open sepulchre we may as well surrender, since the fortress of our religion is blown into the air.

This is the point of Paul's proposition

in this notable chapter. As an old-time enemy of the Gospel he knew precisely what he was saying and how valuable his suggestion might be to the enemies of Christ. Yet he was willing to risk the consequences, because he knew to a certainty what the result would be.

His first statement is, "If you can show that Christ did not rise from the dead, then is our preaching vain." Why so? What was Paul preaching and what have men been preaching from then until now? Here is the substance and sum total of it: Christ is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King.

As our PROPHET or authoritative teacher, he instructs us in spiritual things; and his authority rests on his credentials from God.

To be sure, his precepts stand upon their own merit in any case; but the resurrection miracle creates an antecedent presumption in their favor, without which he can speak only as Plato spoke or Epictetus or Sakyamuni or Confucius or any other wise man. An ounce of gold dust has as much intrinsic value as a gold eagle, but it does not pass

as currency among men because it lacks the image and superscription of the government. If the resurrection of Christ be true, then the authority of a "Thus saith the Lord" rests upon all his words: while without it he is simply one of many teachers among men.

We preach also that Christ is our PRIEST. In ministering at the altar in our behalf he supersedes all other priests; and his atonement supplants all other sacrifices, being offered "once for all."

This is not merely the fundamental fact of our preaching, it is the very heart of the believer's faith. For this reason it is immensely important that it should be clearly and satisfactorily verified; and this verification is found in his resurrection and there only. This miracle bears to the sacerdotal work of Jesus the same relation precisely that the budding of Aaron's rod bore to his priesthood; that is, it certifies that his sacrifice is authorized by God and approved by him.

If his resurrection were to be discredited, the death of Jesus would still remain, but

only as one of the pathetic tragedies of history; or, to put it in Renan's words: "His legend must call forth tears without end and his sufferings melt the noblest heart." But Renan in arguing against the divinity of Jesus held that his death had nothing more to do with our salvation than that of any other good man. The illustrated edition of his *Vie de Jésus* closes with the word "Fin," under which is a rude wood-cut of the crucifixion representing a man of the peasant class, his head sunken upon his breast in an attitude of despair. A sight, indeed, to move all noblest hearts, yet fitly accompanied by the word *finis;* since, so far as his claims to Messianic and salvatory power were concerned, his death ended all.

And we preach also that Christ is KING OVER ALL AND BLESSED FOREVER. At the close of his redemptive work he returned to heaven to reassume the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; where from his high throne he rules by the power of his Spirit over all nations and the children of men.

But if it can be shown that death held and still holds dominion over him, then it is scarcely necessary to say that our ascription of royalty to Christ is as empty as a painted ship upon a painted sea.

"Heavy fall the shadows on the dim horizon,
Veiled the starry eyes from wistful eyes below:
Cold and still thou liest in thine earthly prison;
Whither, Lord and Master, whither shall we go?"

It is related of Saladin, the historic leader of the great campaigns of Islam, that in his last illness he required of his attendants that, instead of hanging the imperial standards at the gate of the palace as was customary when a royal death occurred, they should display his shroud, with the trumpeted proclamation, "Death hath conquered Saladin, the conqueror of the East!" A like confession must be made as to Jesus Christ if he did not issue from the sepulchre on the third day. Let the shroud take the place of the royal standards, since the King of Terrors has triumphed over him.

The saving virtue of the Gospel, which is the comprehensive summary of our preach-

ing, lies in this threefold office of Jesus as our Prophet, our Priest, and our King: as Prophet, setting forth his divine claim to infallibility in the province of truth; as Priest, making atonement for our sins; and as King, asserting his ability "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." But if the appointed sign of his pre-eminence as Prophet, Priest, and King has failed, then our preaching is in vain and the confidence of those who have believed in our preaching is betrayed, since, as Paul says, they are yet in their sins.

This brings us to the second result which, as Paul claims, must follow the disproving of the resurrection of Christ, namely, "Your faith also is vain." Your faith in what? There are three things which Christians are expected to believe with all their hearts; and these constitute the substance of their faith.

They are expected to believe that Jesus, as the long-looked-for Messiah, came into the world to save sinners. He claimed to be that Messiah, "whom kings and prophets longed to see and died without the sight." To the woman of Samaria who expressed a

longing to see the Messiah he said, "I that speak unto thee am he."

As the Messiah he claimed to be coequal with the Father, being his only begotten and well-beloved Son, saying, "I and my Father are one." And the demonstration of the verity of this claim lies in his resurrection; as it is written, "He showed himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead." This had been prophetically set forth as the sign of his Messiahship; as where it is written, "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee"; and again, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." It is apparent, therefore, that the confidence of believers in him is wholly misplaced if he did not thus triumph over death.

They are required to believe, also, that though he ascended into the heavens, he is still really and personally with them. His promise is, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Now this means immeasurably more than that a fragrant memory or a potent influence survives him. Any man may say, as Sheridan did when dying, "I am called away to meet an imperative engagement, but my character will stay behind me": but Christ promises more, and his people expect more of him. He is an ever-present help in time of trouble; a present Saviour, a present Helper, a present Comforter in the heat and burden of the day and in the gathering twilight "that trieth the soul of a man."

This, also, is a delusion, a mere dream, a comfortable hallucination, if the story of Joseph's garden be resolved into a myth. For then he suffered the common doom of humankind, his body returning to the earth as it was and his spirit to God who gave it.

Furthermore, believers are instructed to look for his reappearing.

"Maranatha!" they say, "he cometh again!" And his return is to be marked by the reunion of saints; as Paul writes to the Christians of Thessalonica: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concern-

ing them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

"As for thy friends, they are not lost;
The several vessels of thy fleet,
Though sundered far, by tempest tossed,
Shall safely in the harbor meet."

But if Christ be not risen, this also is an illusion. He shall not "so come as ye have seen him go into heaven"; nor is there any ground for our believing in the day of "knitting severed friendships up."

The conclusion of Paul therefore — "Then are we of all men most miserable" — is an inevitable sequence. We are miserable in our rude awaking from a most delightful dream. We thought he came to save us; we felt ourselves supported among the cares and burdens of life by his abiding presence; we fondly looked for his return and the return of our beloved with him. But farewell! "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain."

The third conclusion of Paul, in case the

doctrine of the resurrection should be refuted, is that "we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ." The "we" in this case includes all followers of Christ, since all are officially appointed and commissioned to be witnesses for him.

The master-stroke of tactical opposition is here pointed out: impeach the witnesses! If this can be accomplished, the case, which carries with it the integrity of the entire Christian system, is summarily thrown out of court.

One of the witnesses designated is Paul himself, who says, "Last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." The reference was to his conversion on the Damascus highway, when he heard the Voice saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," and straightway answered, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It has been affirmed that this was merely a spiritual communication and not a personal appearance at all; but obviously, nothing is gained by giving this turn to the argument, since it involves such a concession

of the supernatural as would leave the difficulty more unsolved than ever.

And it would still be necessary to impugn the testimony of Mary Magdalene and the other women; of Peter and the two men of Emmaus; of the seven apostles who affirmed that they saw Jesus in the upper room; of the eleven, who affirmed that they saw him afterwards on the seashore and again upon the mountain; of James, who held a solitary interview with him; of the "more than five hundred brethren" of whom Paul wrote, A.D. 59, "the greater part remain unto this present"; and also of that considerable company who saw him on the day of his ascension.

It is, indeed, a trifle late to endeavor to reach and cross-question these witnesses, whose testimony seems not to have been doubted, certainly not refuted, while they were living and able to speak for themselves. And the cumulative evidence which they gave has appeared to judicial minds, like Whately and Greenleaf and Blackstone, to be so massive as to forbid all serious effort to invalidate it.

And how about the great cloud of witnesses who, all along the centuries, have testified out of the depths of their religious experience that he who was dead liveth and is alive forevermore, and that they have held and are ever holding communion with him? There are some hundreds of millions of people today who bear such testimony. And it can be said without fear of contradiction, and speaking within bounds, that among them are a vast number of upright, liberally educated, and thoughtful men.

The only possibility of controverting this evidence is to subject it to what is called the "scientific test"; that is, to deny the reality of everything that lies outside the circumscription of the physical senses. It is true that spiritual things are apprehended only by faith; so that if faith be ruled out, all things supernatural vanish, as life itself disappears when the surgeon with his scalpel pursues it. If the brain is merely phosphorus and thought the result of atomic friction; if a man be only a stomach with its appurtenances; if there is no such thing as religious experience; then the testimony

of this multitude of living witnesses to the risen Christ is properly ruled out of court, but not otherwise.

What then? Our churches must close, since preachers of the Gospel are proved to be false witnesses. "Othello's occupation's gone." *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus.* Certainly, if these witnesses are impeached as to their testimony concerning the fundamental fact of the Gospel, there is nothing to be gained by lending an ear to their presentation of other details and particulars. Call in the evangelists and missionaries also, who are crossing the oceans and climbing the mountains and penetrating the regions of darkness to declare the Gospel. All are false witnesses. Call them in; and with them call in the progress of civilization and the hope of the Golden Age.

If such results, so dire and calamitous to Christianity, would follow the overthrow of the doctrine of the resurrection, why is it that Christ's enemies have not accomplished it? And, above all, why do they not concentrate their attacks upon this citadel of the faith? Why do they persist in aim-

ing their siege guns at points of relatively subordinate value? Ah, experience teaches.

While the railway through Utah to the Pacific Coast was under construction it met with a sudden check. In building across an arm of the Great Salt Lake a sink hole was encountered which seemed to indicate an underground outlet. Some thousands of carloads of earth were dumped into it, and seven steel piles were driven one upon another. A train was then run across this structure, and on reaching the critical place the track suddenly sank, and with it locomotive, tender, and all. It was then decided to run the line some other way. For a like reason the oft-repeated attack upon the doctrine of the resurrection has been practically given up. What a vast amount of dialectic energy has been dumped into it! What libraries of futile argument! Was it not so prophesied? "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."

But Christ must somehow be kept in his sepulchre. Pilate was right: "Ye have a watch; go your way; make it as sure as ye can." And it is written, "They went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." God laughed! A strong angel came down and rolled away the stone. The guards fell as dead men, while Christ came forth, wiping the death-dew from his brow. So is come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But if the adversary fail to keep Christ down, what then? The witnessing must go on. "Go quickly," said the angel at the sepulchre, "and tell the disciples that he is risen from the dead!" All Christians are under orders to go and tell it. Tell the world that Christ came as the Messiah; that he lived a spotless life to show what character is and what men ought to be;

that he died, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; and that he rose again, placing the seal of divine authority upon his Messianic claims and redemptive work. Go tell the world that life and immortality are brought to light through him. Go say that the faith of his followers is not in vain and that those who are fallen asleep in Christ are not perished. Go with the message that Christ is now risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that sleep; for as the early sheaf, which was waved at the altar, was a proof and prophecy of the ingathering of the autumnal harvest, so shall all God's acre be reaped and garnered in the Great Day. Go say that as the death of the seed-corn is but an episode in its life, so is our death but "a covered bridge, leading from light to light through a brief darkness." Go say that he who believeth in Christ hath everlasting life, because having shown himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead, he hath thereby proved beyond all doubt or peradventure that he hath power on earth to forgive sin.

XII

"LO, I AM WITH YOU"

WE are hearing much about "The Practice of the Presence of God." The phrase is not new. It appears to have originated with one Nicholas of Lorraine, who about two hundred years ago wrote a little book with that title. It was an epoch-making book, which is the more remarkable since its author was no philosopher, nor even a moderately learned man, but a mere pastry-cook in one of the mansions of his time. He was, however, a mystic, who dreamed dreams and saw visions to some effect. He knew what it was, even as he stood among the rattling pans and kettles of that kitchen in Lorraine, to live as if his life were hid with Christ in God.

But who is this God, whose Presence we are to practise? The essential God is beyond our ken. No man hath ever seen

him or can see him. But in due time he bowed the heavens and came down to us in the person of his only begotten Son. It is claimed that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him. "Show us the Father," said Philip, "and it sufficeth us." And Jesus said: "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;* and how sayest thou then, 'Show us the Father'? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?"

By this it appears that Jesus claimed to be very God of very God. In him the Deity is adjusted to human eyes, so that one who refuses to see God in Christ has no reason to expect that he will ever know him at all. It is obvious then that when we speak of "practising the Presence," we mean the Presence of Christ, in whom God has so revealed himself that he is "never far from any one of us."

They say that we are living in "an age of doubt"; but too often that which we call doubt is crass unbelief, which is not peculiar to any age. The spirit of materi-

alism is all about us. It rests upon a so-called "science" which rejects the supernatural and receives nothing which the physical senses cannot apprehend. It reduces all things to matter, and then — by a change more singular than any of the metamorphoses of Ovid — merges into idealism and denies that matter has any reality! It analyzes the gray substance of the brain and pronounces it to be phosphorus; and then proceeds to analyze its output — what we call "thought" — as a will-o'-the-wisp. It summons a group of "scientists" from Boston to weigh the immortal soul as it escapes from the body in the article of dissolution, and sets it down in avoirdupois at somewhat less than an ounce. Such are the strange achievements of "scientific" unbelief in these days.

Is there any reality in truth? Is our life mere nitrous oxide or is it the veritable breath of God? Is God himself a fact or a phantasm? Was Christ the divine revealer of things unseen and eternal, or was he a dreamer among the shadows, passing on with the long procession of other shadowy

forms to No Man's Land? Did he come forth from the sepulchre or not? This is the touchstone by which the most important problems of our time must be solved. In other words, *Is Christ dead or alive today?*

But what do we mean by his "presence"? In some quarters there is an effort to explain it away as a mere influence. We hear much also of the "immanence" of Christ. I do not like that word in this connection. It has a cold, mechanical sound. It suggests the enveloping atmosphere which presses upon us with a power of fifteen pounds to the square inch or thereabouts. This is not Christ's meaning when he promises to be with us alway. He meant precisely what he said, that he would be personally with us. And he is thus personally with us as our friend and counsellor and guide. He links arms with us, as it were, and walks beside us in our journey until we pass through the gates into the Heavenly City.

To realize his presence continuously for one single day would be a revolutionary ex-

perience in many Christian lives. Think, then, what it would be to practise that presence habitually, hour by hour, moment by moment, of every day. For his presence is an abiding presence, as he said: "Lo, I am with you *alway:* I will never — never — never — leave you nor forsake you."

And it is a Conscious Presence. Can one be sheltered in the secret place of the Lord's pavilion and not know it? Though he be absorbed in a thousand cares, yet will he have, deep down in his subconsciousness, the feeling that the Lord is with him. Is not the man who goes forth in the morning to his customary toil, mindful all day long of the loving wife who stood in the doorway to give him God-speed and who will be there again at evening to greet him? Her life is interwoven with his. He need not be continually murmuring her name or renewing his marriage vows; it suffices that she is always with him, and the day's work is pleasure because of her.

This Presence of Christ is also a Delectable Presence. One who is on bad terms with the Lord is afraid to be with

him; yet he knows he cannot escape him. Listen to this: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

He who is right with God hides in his presence and delights in it. This sense of the Presence makes us "coy and tender to offend." For how can one indulge in deliberate sin when he knows that the Lord is just beside him? And he is always there, more real than hands or feet, closer than seeing or touching, nearest and kindest of friends, ever living with and in us.

I have an acquaintance who, years ago, contracted the opium habit. It wrought such physical ravages that at length its

discontinuance became a matter of life or death. He employed three nurses to serve in relays of eight hours each and be with him constantly day and night. They were never to leave him for a moment under any circumstances, lest he should break through his resolution and disannul what was now the desperate purpose of his life. And he thus succeeded in freeing himself from the awful spell. That is precisely what the perpetual sense of God's presence would do for every one of us.

And it would also provide a full equipment for the discharge of duty. The man who, bearing the name of Christ, stands idle in the market-place, would straightway address himself to his commission, were he to see his Lord beside him, sickle in hand pointing to the yellow fields.

A few miles out of Rome on the Appian Way stands a little church called "Domine, Quo Vadis," that is, "Lord, whither goest thou?" The story, in late years enlarged upon by Sienkiewicz, runs that in time of persecution Peter, overcome by fear, fled from the obligations of his parish in Rome.

As he was hastening along the Appian Way, he met his Master at this place, his face turned toward the city. "Lord, whither goest thou?" cried Peter. He answered, "I go to Rome to be crucified again for thee!" Need it be said that Peter retraced his steps?

Oh, the shame of indolence in the light of his face who said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work!" To keep company with him is to address ourselves with scrupulous care and eagerness to every task. The cook in the kitchen at Lorraine filled, it is true, but a humble sphere of usefulness; yet, though it were but to turn the spit or kindle the fire, he did it as Practising the Presence.

> "A servant with that clause
> Makes drudgery divine;
> Who sweeps a room as by God's laws
> Makes that and th' action fine."

The sense of the Presence stimulates us, also, to the building of character. For Christ is our Exemplar. We cannot look at him without striving to be like him. We

cannot see the manner of his walk and conversation without being moved to "covet the best things."

It is a common saying that those who live much together grow to resemble one another. A man and wife, like Darby and Joan, as the years pass, borrow each others' very smiles and attitudes. The soldiers in the army of Henry of Navarre, moved by admiration for their great captain, placed white plumes in their hats and wore their swords as he wore his. A like result must follow in the case of Christians who abide in the fellowship of their Lord. Their ambition is to measure up to him, that they may attain unto the fulness of the stature of a man.

> "Such was thy truth and such thy zeal,
> Such deference to thy Father's will,
> Such love, and meekness so divine,
> I would transcribe and make them mine."

Moreover, the practice of the Presence leads to patience in suffering. He with whom we walk is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. If we suffer with

him, we shall also be glorified together. Think you Simon of Cyrene complained of bearing the Master's cross while that Master, wearied by the same burden, walked beside him? Was it strange that Paul gloried in his tribulations when he was able to say, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh"?

And the practice of the Presence gives fortitude in death. Blessed is he who can say, "In the valley of the shadow I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." In Wesley's last sickness he kept repeating, "We two are so joined, he can't go to heaven and leave me behind"; and at the very last he murmured, "This is best of all; Immanuel! God with us!"

The world does not believe that God is thus present with men in the person of his beloved Son. In evidence mark the quick step in the market-place. See the people who jostle each other along our streets. What is their purpose in life? Is the light in their eyes kindled by a consuming passion for things unseen and

eternal? Is it the eagerness of their quest of truth and righteousness that has ploughed these wrinkles on their brows? No, they are chiefly Epicureans, who "forever hastening to the grave stoop downward as they run." If a passing thought of the hereafter comes to them, it is thrust aside with all possible haste that they may go on groping for yellow dust. If perchance they lift their eyes, it is but to pursue with juvenile zeal the thistle-down of flitting pleasure. The aphorism of the world's life is just what it was in Athens nineteen hundred years ago: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!"

And having noted the quick step in the market-place, observe the slow step to the graveyard. The mourners go thither on leaden feet to bewail the dead; and their miserere, despite the Resurgam which is inscribed upon the sepulchre, is a hopeless farewell. The dead are dead; and the world's tears have no rainbows in them. The sepulchre is sealed; the great stone is ever before it. Dead men and dead gods go together. The dust that rises from our

streets is the dust of generations gone by. Do they live again? Not unless there is a living God who triumphs over death. The stone on the sepulchre is sealed with the seal of Oblivion. The Pantheon stands opposite God's Acre; and that, too, is fastened with the seal of Oblivion. Zeus and Apollo are there; the gods of Walhalla and the dreamy-eyed Buddha — all dead and none so poor as to do them reverence. The Pantheon answers to the graveyard, "Death ends all!"

Nor is the Church blameless. With what reluctant steps and how mincingly she approaches her great business! Are we seeking "*first* the kingdom of God"? Are we seriously distressed for the twelve hundred millions of souls who, after nineteen centuries of an alleged Christian propaganda, are still dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death? It is recorded that Scotland was once saved by an army following a golden urn in which was the embalmed heart of Robert the Bruce. However that may be, the Christian conquest of the world can never be accom-

plished in that way — never, never, under the leadership of a dead Christ. No mere name, though embalmed in the most fragrant remembrance, can furnish the inspiration which the church needs today. The living Christ must lead the way, his white plume, like that of Henry of Navarre, ever waving before us. We serve not under a commission that was uttered nineteen hundred years ago on Olivet, but under the present, personal leadership of one who speaks here and now, saying: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and evangelize; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It is the voice of the living Christ. See him in the forefront! Hear him calling, "Follow me!"

This is the message for our troublous time. Up with the banner of the living Christ! *Sursum corda!* Only thus shall we give a cavilling world to understand that our Gospel is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

It may be that you cherish among your treasures an old letter, brown and thumbed

and tear-stained, written by one who passed out of your life long ago. But what if, as you sit reading it, a hand were to be laid upon your shoulder, and looking up, you should behold the face of the dead and hear him say, "Weep not, I am with you!" The Gospel is precisely such a letter; it is God's message of salvation to you and me. Let us read it today in an attitude of listening expectancy. Lift up your eyes; he is here! He speaks! It is the voice of the shepherd come to woo his bride. "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

XIII

MORS JANUA VITAE

IN the twilight of an Easter morning I dreamed a dream in which a great multitude of people seemed to be travelling in caravans through an open country; and their faces were all turned one way. There were all sorts and conditions of people: Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free. There were kings and yeomen, queens and courtesans, beggars and millionnaires, idlers and handicraftsmen, captains returning from conquest with long processions of slaves dragged at their chariot wheels, philosophers and simple folk. But they journeyed together and their faces were all turned one way. They travelled by many roads, broad and narrow, crooked and straight, by-paths and royal highways; but the roads all tended in one direction,

converging at a great gate which towered aloft in the distance and cast its shadow over the whole land.

On this side of the gate was a river; and the river was dark, because the gate cast its mysterious gloom above it.

And on this side of the river was a valley; and the shadow of the gate fell over that also, insomuch that it was called "The Valley of the Shadow." And the gloom of that valley was so deep that none could see beforehand what of pain and comfort awaited him in passing through it.

I saw that the travellers were afraid of this valley and of the river and of the gate; wherefore many of them averted their eyes and refused to look that way.

Then I heard a voice like the low roll of thunder saying, "Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust!"

It was the voice of the King of Terrors; and I knew then that the gate was the Gate of Death, which marks the terminal of mortal life. For so it is written, "It is appointed unto all men once to die." I saw a little child approach the gate; and

playing and laughing to the very threshold, yet there shrank, and so passed in.

I saw an old man, so very old that he was bent double with the burden of his years; he it was whose record runs thus: "All the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years — and he died"; even he, lifting his dim eyes and seeing the gate, trembled and passed in.

A workman drew near to the gate and, as if realizing that his work was over, laid down his tools and passed through. A rich man, so absorbed in gain that his very soul had turned yellow with the jaundice of gold, murmuring to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry," suddenly lifted his eyes and, seeing the gate, turned ashen pale, disgorged his wealth, and passed in. And the air seemed vibrant with these words, "Thou fool, whose now shall those things be?" A king approached and, casting his crown and purple aside, lifted both his hands palms upward and quite empty, and disappeared from view. This was he who boasted that he had

conquered the world; and behold, he left it all.[1]

An old man with a benignant face drew near and, laying aside his garments, sang a hymn, which I remembered having heard him singing to himself at eventide:

"The day is past and gone,
The evening shades appear;
Oh, may we all remember well
The night of death draws near.
We lay our garments by
Upon our beds to rest.
So death will soon disrobe us all
Of what we were possessed."

I observed, moreover, that all these travellers passed on alone. As they entered the Valley of the Shadow, each turned to his friends and said, "Good-night!" They would fain have gone a little farther with him; but they could not. For him it was a sad leave-taking not only of his friends

[1] It is recorded that when Alexander the Great was on his deathbed he commanded that in preparing his body for the grave his hands should be left outside the shroud with the palms exposed, so that all might see that there was nothing in them.

but of life itself and opportunity and earthly possession. Thus alone and empty-handed they passed on.

But why were these pilgrims afraid? Why did they avert their gaze and tremble as they drew near? Was it because they could not see beyond, and like little children, were afraid of the dark? Partly that, no doubt, but chiefly because of the terrors of the law. For so it is written, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." What law? "The soul that sinneth it shall die!" And, alas, they were all sinners; there was no difference—all had sinned and come short of the glory of God.

On the hither side of the gate were heaps of refuse, scattered at either hand. Here were odds and ends of everything that men count dear: goods and chattels, gold and silver, bonds and mortgages, crowns and laurel wreaths, bodkins and spindles, arms and armor, workmen's tools, clothing, too, of every sort, purple and fine linen, as well as homespun, masks and buskins; the things for which men live and labor with tears and blood; all now thrown by! For

so it is ordained; naked came we into the world and naked must we go. We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Then I heard another voice, louder than that of the King of Terrors and sweeter than the music of a harp, saying, "Be of good courage; this is the Gate of Life!"

He who spoke was standing beside an open sepulchre, and near the sepulchre was a Cross; and a strange light, which seemed to issue from the tomb, fell upon the Cross, and then upon the gate and the dark river and the valley. And I knew this was the sepulchre of Christ in whom life and immortality were brought to light.

He knew whereof he spake, for he himself had passed through the gate. It was written of him, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise, took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death." In order that he might become the first-born of many brethren he had been born of a woman.

In his infancy he was wrapped in swaddling bands. In manhood he wore homespun and toiled in a workshop. In his ministry he traversed the weary thoroughfares of Palestine, wearing the dusty garments of a wayfarer. In his death he was clad in cerecloths and carried to the tomb. All this he did as our Elder Brother and representative; that, living and dying, he might be one with us. He lay in the sepulchre as one who slept, and rising, blessed the bed.[1] As he passed through the great gate he, turning, said: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

The light that issued from the open sepulchre fell also upon the faces of many of the pilgrims, so that they feared no more.

[1] "No more a charnel-house, to fence
The relics of lost innocence,
A vault of ruin and decay.
The imprisoning stone is rolled away;
'Tis now a place where angels use
To come and go with heavenly news,
And in the ears of mourners say,
'Come, see the place where Jesus lay!'"

They, too, must needs bid their friends farewell, but not as if they were never to meet. It was only "Until we meet again." As they passed through the valley they sang, "I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." As they forded the river they sang, "I am not afraid; for thou has redeemed me. I pass through the deep waters, but they shall not overflow me; for thou art the God of my salvation." And at the gate the light fell so wondrously upon their faces that fear was wholly supplanted by the radiance of hope. Thus they passed in.

One of these closed his eyes, as Stephen did when falling asleep; and when he opened them it was with a look of glad surprise, as if he suddenly realized the truth of that intimation, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Another, weary with the long struggle of life and conscious of having done his best, said, like Paul, as he entered the gate: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished

my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." And still another, looking through the gate, saw something which seemed not only to amaze but to transfigure him; so that, reaching up his hands, he cried:

"The world recedes, it disappears;
Heaven opens on my eyes; mine ears
With sound seraphic ring: Lend, lend your wings!
I mount, I fly! O grave, where is thy victory?
O death, where is thy sting?"

I saw now that the light from the open sepulchre fell beyond the gate. On the left was a region of darkness, with shadows flitting through it; and on the right "a better country, even an heavenly." As far as one could see were fields "all dressed in living green." The people were clothed in white, and employed in the service of the King. As they served they sang, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us out of every kindred, and tongue and people and nation and hath made us unto our God kings and priests."

In the far distance was a throne; and he that sat upon it was arrayed in garments white and glistering. His face shone with a refulgence that, mingling with the light of the open sepulchre, fell over all the country; as it is written: "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it."

I observed that when these travellers, with the light reflected on their faces, passed through the gate and turned to the right to enter the Better Country, they all gave the countersign, "In his Name." It was the name which is above every name that is named in heaven or on earth; the name of Jesus, the Prince of Life, who had said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." And when they gave that countersign, he himself said, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Then straightway they began to sing with a loud voice, saying, "Blessing, and

honor, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

And in the distance beyond the gate, I saw their welcome. Never were strangers returning from a long absence so joyously received. Friends gathered from near and far. Oh, blessed home-bringing! Wives who had been separated from their husbands greeted them with joy unspeakable. Mothers clasped in their arms the children who had slipped away from them years before. They all said, "Good-morning!" In that better country they never say "Good-night!" because there is no night nor any partings there. The shadows never fall.

Among them was one who in her earthly life had written thus:

"Life, we have been long together
In pleasant and in cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
Then steal away, give little warning;
Say not Good-night, but in some brighter clime
Give me Good Morning."

So I saw them making merry together.

Their sorrows were over. They had passed through the Gateway of Life into an endless day.

Then the curtain of my vision fell; and I saw no more. But the Easter bells were ringing; and they seemed to say: "Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

And once more is heard the voice of the Prince of Life: "Be of good cheer. Death does not end all. In the light of the resurrection death begins all. Life is worth living, because it leads to life further on. Character is worth building, because it is the house that ye shall live in forever. Work is worth doing, because your works do follow you. My cross is worth bearing because, if ye suffer with me, ye shall also reign with me. Be of good courage, therefore! Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid!"

XIV

WHAT PETER SAW

WE have seen how Peter after the death and burial of Jesus said, "I go a-fishing," and how his friend John said, "I also go with thee." They had, however, gone but a little way when they were overtaken by Mary of Magdala with the startling message that Jesus was risen. "It's a mere rumor," they said, "but we will go and see." They set out accordingly at a sedate pace, but presently broke into a run; for if this rumor were true, it was the best news that ever fell on mortal ears.

As they entered the garden they were divided betwixt doubt, wonder, and unspeakable hope. They found the grave empty. Did this mean that Jesus had triumphed over death? If so, the winter was past, indeed, and the time of the singing of birds had come. If so, life was worth living after

all. What possibilities opened up before them as they stood gazing into the gloom!

Now Peter, more adventurous than his companion, has entered the tomb. John asks, "What seest thou?" He answers, "The cerecloths are here" — and doubtless the voice of the fisherman broke with tender recollections — "the very shroud wherein we wrapped him, still fragrant with the spices brought us by Joseph of Arimathea."

Let us pause a moment to gaze upon these grave-clothes; for they suggest a truth which brings our Saviour into nearest fellowship with us.

He who in his infancy had been wrapped in swaddling bands, and in his manhood had put on the homespun of a carpenter, now wore a shroud. Thus he took upon him our nature with all its attendant conditions, even unto the end. We approach God's Acre with a firmer step since we know that he passed through its wicket-gate; the earth is not so cold since then, the sepulchre less dark. "So Jesus slept."

"And, passing through the grave,
He blessed the bed."

XV

HAMLET'S SOLILOQUY

THE melancholy Dane was wrong: "To be or not to be" is not "the question." Our immortality is a foregone conclusion by virtue of the fact that the divine breath is in us.

The wish was father to the thought when Macbeth sighed,

> "Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more."

If it were true that death ends all, life would not be worth living. Koheleth was right: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher. All is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

But suppose death does not end all? Suppose death is merely an incident on life's way? Suppose it is but a bend in the road where we pass out of sight and leave our friends weeping behind us? Suppose we close our eyes, to open them and go living right on? Suppose we are building characters like houses that we must live in forever? What then? Why then, "it is not all of life to live, nor all of death to die."

But what can we know about it? That depends on what you mean by "knowing." If you mean, is it possible to arrive at such a definite certainty with respect to immortality that we shall nevermore be tempted to doubt or question or lift our eyebrows, then we cannot know. In point of fact we know nothing that way.

How do we arrive at definite knowledge with respect to anything? Do you say by the evidence of senses? But you cannot trust your eyes. We are subject to optical illusions every moment of the day. We are all the while "seeing things," such as ghosts and spectres, where there is really

nothing. You think my coat is black; but that is so far from being true that the color is literally "all in your eye." You say, "Seeing is believing." It is nothing of the sort. And your ears are as untrustworthy as your eyes. Allowance must be made for false acoustics. You speak of a "drumming in your ears." That is a mistake, the fact being that your stomach or liver is out of order. You say you hear thunder, when there is blasting over at the Palisades. It would appear, therefore, that nothing is more illusory than the evidence of the physical senses.

But surely we can arrive at knowledge by mathematical demonstration? We are told that "figures cannot lie." Are you sure of it? We used to be quite certain that two and two make four; but investigators in the province of the higher mathematics tell us that they have discovered a fourth dimension which makes it possible that two and two may really make three or five, as the case may be.

Can we know, then, by force of logic? One of the earliest syllogisms is *Cogito ergo*

sum, that is, "I think, therefore I am." But there are those who say that the syllogism is no longer effective, and that the most convincing argument has always a loophole in it.

The possibility of arriving at positive knowledge by such methods or any other has been so discredited in some quarters that one of our modern thinkers has ventured to say, "I cannot affirm that I know anything; *not even that I know nothing.*" This is a more extreme statement than Mark Twain's, "It is better to know a few things that are so, than to know a great many things that are not so"; but the question is whether we can even "know" anything that is so.

We take satisfaction, however, in the possibility of believing without knowing in the sense referred to. We believe ten thousand things that we do not know. If I were to say that you cannot know that your mother was a good woman, you would resent it, simply because her character was such that it has never been called in question. When you sat down to breakfast

this morning, what evidence had you that your wife and your grocer and your cook had not conspired to poison you? None at all; you were content to accept the contrary without knowing it. When you were coming to church, how did you know that every man you met was not meditating an attack upon you? You did not need to know. When you go to bed to-night, what assurance can you have that a spark is not kindled in the lintel of your window or that a burglar is not planning to rob you? None whatever. You just take it for granted that all's well. In other words, you live by faith; or let us rather say, you live by plain common sense.

Now in all fairness suppose that we apply this same common sense to the problem of immortality. We cannot know to a definite certainty, as the saying is, that if a man dies he will live again; but we may nevertheless believe and comfortably rest in it.

We may believe it as a first consideration because there is no evidence to the contrary. To say that because the body dies the man who occupied it has ceased to live is pure

assumption; as distinctly so as if, on seeing the sign "To Let" on a vacant home, you were to conclude that the former tenant had ceased to be. If you pluck a torn cocoon from a rose tree, do you leap to the conclusion that the former occupant is no more? Not at all. In that torn cocoon we have the basic argument for the immortality of the soul. The Greek word for soul is *psuche*, which is personified in the fable of Psyche, the butterfly. The Romans took up the figure where the Greek philosophers left it, and inscribed on the sepulchres of their dead the logical word, "*Emigravit*," that is, "He has passed on."

We may also believe in immortality because of our personal intuition, which is evidence from within. Why not test it? Ask yourself, "If I die shall I live again?" and see how instantly the inward voice responds, "I shall live and not die." This is a generic intuition. The thought of annihilation was as abhorrent to the old pagans as to us. We read of Cato sitting at a table whereon lay an open dagger, and soliloquizing thus:

"Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us,
And intimates eternity to man!
The soul secure in her existence smiles
At the drawn dagger and defies its point.
The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age and nature sink in years:
But thou shalt flourish in eternal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds!"

We accept this truth of immortality in the third place because of the universal consensus. The Greeks and Romans; the Persians; the Egyptians who mummied their dead; the Chaldeans who inscribed on their royal tombs, "Like a bird he has flown to his nest"; the American Indians who look forward to "the happy hunting ground"; the fetich worshippers of Africa who imagine themselves surrounded by the spirits of the dead; all nations in fact, everywhere and from the very beginning of the world, have believed in it. The man who undertakes to deny it has to confront an innumerable cloud of witnesses. The world is against him! It is possible, of

course, that there has been a universal mistake in this matter; but it does look to an unprejudiced thinker as if there must be something back of it.

Back of all these instinctive convictions appears the authority of science. If there is any fact which has been scientifically established it is the conservation of energy. No force is ever annihilated: it may be transformed, but it cannot be blotted out. If your neighbor's house burns down, you are not at liberty to conclude that any constituent part of it has really ceased to be. The forces that were absorbed by the growing timber from air and sunlight and moisture have simply been released by combustion and returned to their original form. So is it with this tabernacle of flesh in which we dwell. But if the body is indestructible, how much more the soul which occupies it! The Scriptures speak in strictly scientific terms when they say that the body returns to the earth as it was and the soul to God who gave it.

The marvel is that any scientist should doubt the immortality of the soul. Not

long ago Doctor Carrel, in a lecture on the Mystery of Death, made the announcement that he had succeeded in transferring the stomach and other organs of an animal to a vessel in his laboratory, where they had continued to perform their normal functions up to date. A marvelous achievement! But if after the body dies the viscera can go on living, for a while, why should it be supposed that the soul is reduced to *nil?* Why should the soul, the greatest moral force in the universe, be made the one solitary exception to the otherwise universal law of the conservation of force? One is reminded of what Napoleon said, "You physicians are disposed to unbelief, because you cannot find the soul with a dissecting knife." No one really doubts the existence of the soul — the thinking, praying part of a man. It is there. What becomes of it?

Proceeding upward in constructing our bulwark of proofs, our fifth witness is philosophy. Philosophy is "the investigation of causes, founded on reason and experience." It takes up great problems where science leaves them. It seeks to

answer the supreme questions of life by accounting for the phenomena which attend it. The philosophers of Greece, in their quest of truth, were driven either into agnosticism or an acknowledgment of immortality. It was remarked by Friedrich Strauss that "the doctrine of immortality was the last enemy that speculative philosophy had to encounter." Here was a significant admission, that speculative philosophy, after centuries of assault upon the doctrine of immortality, had not been able to disprove it. Let us place over against that statement of an unbeliever the triumphant words of Paul: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" — not immortality, but death!

Our final appeal is always to the Scriptures as the Word of God. It has been said that the Bible does not in set form affirm the truth of immortality; but why should it? Immortality is the fundamental postulate on which it rests. Were it not for the life beyond, the Bible would be as meaningless as a Delphic riddle. The Book is based on the assumption that death does not end

all; rather that death ends nothing — but *begins all.*

In the midst of the Book stands Christ, saying, "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." Does he mean animal life? If not, what then? Immortality? Yes, that and immeasurably more, as we shall see. Thus in the Gospel life and immortality are brought to light; that is, brought out of the dim realm of hope and wondering and vain imagining, into the clear daylight of the assurance of faith.

But now assuming that we live forever, what of it? Just one thing; we are bound to live accordingly here and now. It is unworthy of us to seek the things that perish with the using, as if our life were hemmed in by the narrow horizon of threescore years and ten. We are here to get ready for an eternity further on. This means that we should rid ourselves of sin and put on righteousness; for sin alone can disqualify us for happiness in that eternal life. Without holiness no man shall see God.

By these considerations we are driven straight to Christ. He alone has power on earth to forgive sin and to array us in fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints.

It is the part of wisdom to build our characters, as Piso boasted that he built his home, "for eternity." If we are pilgrims and sojourners here, it behooves each of us to take up our pilgrim staff and walk by faith toward the city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.

XVI

"LIFE ETERNAL"

WHAT is "Life Eternal"? I wish I knew. I wish I could define it. But "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The woman of Sychar lived in a valley circled about by the everlasting hills. She looked across the summit of Ebal and dreamed of the Great River and its mysteries; or beyond Gerizim where, now and then, a golden mist rose from the Great Sea. No doubt there were occasional strangers who came with news from over there: but it was Wonderland to her.

So do we dwell in a little world, hemmed in by the circumscription of time and space, absorbed in the petty affairs of the shop and household, with only dreams and guesses for the great Beyond. We know

that we are larger than the world we live in, born for greater things than grinding at the mill, with an unquenchable thirst for life, more life, eternal life; but alas, our longings often travail to no birth; and life itself awaits a definition. All heaven is full of saints triumphant who have emerged from the shadows; but when they come back to our Valley, as ministering spirits, they always come with their fingers on their lips.

There are some things, however, that we know about it.

To begin with, *Everlasting Life is a fact.*

One of the oldest of proverbs tells us that "Nature never deceives." It was upon that postulate that Socrates reasoned out the problem of immortality. "If this be a dream," said he, "let me still dream on. Better be disappointed than suffer from the horror that death ends all!" But this is no dream, since there is no appetite without provision made for supplying it. How, then, will you explain this thirst of mine, unless there be water somewhere to quench it?

We know, also, that Everlasting Life is more than immortality: that is, the mere continuance of our present life.

To breathe, and eat and drink; to rise in the morning and address ourselves to the round of common tasks; to come home weary under the heat and burden of the day, and lie down again to sleep and wake and resume the tread-mill — this does not content us. But however flat, stale and unprofitable such an existence may be, it must go on. I am immortal because God's breath is in me. I cannot help it. There is no folly comparable with that of the man who commits suicide in order to escape from life. The vital spark cannot be extinguished thus. When the tenant moves out of his tabernacle of flesh, he merely moves on. But to keep on breathing is not to enter into Everlasting Life. There is something more, infinitely more beyond, for faith to grasp.

We know still further, that whatever this Everlasting Life may be, it has some vital relation with God. "We came out from

him," as Augustine said, "and we will never rest until we rest in him." We have lost our birthright, and can regain it only by getting right with him.

So it is written, "This is life eternal, to know God": this is to be in harmony with all his beneficent plans and purposes concerning us; to be true to the divine law, which is also the law of our being; to rest under his complacent smile; to permit no cloud of separation to come between our souls and him.

It is something divine within us that cries, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" Nature never deceives. Our dry-lipped souls call, as with an articulate voice, for a drink from the well beside the gate of God.

And still another thing that we know about this spiritual and eternal life is that if it ever begins, it must begin here and now. Indeed, that is what we are here for.

It is impossible to explain this hand-breadth of uncertainty and incompleteness that we call life — this confusion of threads and thrums, of unrealized ideals and un-

righted wrongs — without regarding it as a mere introduction to something further on. All the difficult hills shall be levelled and all the crooked places made straight when Eternity opens up before us.

But if this life is probationary, there must be a Statute of Limitations; that is to say, probation must end. Were it not for that, death would have no terrors. Death is the border line where character is crystallized; and as the tree falleth so also shall it lie. Thus it is written: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Wherefore it behooves us, as men contemplating a long journey, to make suitable provision for it.

To sum up and round into completeness this noble truth, we are told that *this everlasting life is in Christ.*

It was for this reason, and for no other, that he came into this world of ours. "I am come," he said, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abun-

dantly." This is precisely in line with what he said to the woman at the well: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

He confers this life in a two-fold way: on the one hand by relieving us of the shame and penalty of sin. Sin is the only thing in the world that intervenes between us and God. It is written that, in the at-one-ment wrought by his vicarious pain, he nailed to his Cross the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and took it out of the way. The soul that was alienated is thus reconciled with God.

On the other hand, he qualifies us for everlasting life by introducing us into an apprenticeship which fits us for the responsibilities that await us. "Follow me," he said, "and the works that I do shall ye do also." In the service of the Kingdom on earth we learn how to do the things that await us in the Kingdom of Heaven, of which it is written, "There his servants shall serve him."

Let us not suppose, however, that this wonderful life, either here or in heaven, is the same for all. In some particulars this is so. The saint who occupies the lowest seat in heaven is as free from the record of past sin as the one who stands nearest the throne. He is equally delivered from the consequences of sin: for him also there is no pain nor sorrow there; no farewells; no hearses rumbling through the streets. And before the lowest also is an immeasurable vista of possible progress, from grace to grace and from glory to glory, forever and ever.

But this does not mean that the felicities of heaven are on a dead level for all. A snail and an eagle are both alive and happy in their way; but a snail crawls while an eagle soars and kindles its undazzled eyes at the noonday sun.

To the thief who had lived but an hour of penitent faith, the promise was given, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Thanks be to God for the omnipotent grace that can save a sinner thus "betwixt the saddle and the ground"! But think you

his Paradise could measure up to that of Paul — a veteran bearing about in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus — who after a long and eventful life of toil and peril in his Master's service bowed at the headsman's block, closed his eyes and opened them in the presence of the Lord? Oh, no; incredible! The snail crawls out of danger, but the eagle flies to the bosom of God.

The skipper of a ship who loses his vessel and all its lading may gird himself with a life-belt and swim to safety; but his joy is not like that of another who by superior seamanship brings his cargo into port. So it is written, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as fire." God forbid that we should be satisfied with a salvation "so as by fire," but grant that we may go sweeping through the gates with an "abundant entrance" into that great salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last day.

A Christian woman may bring up her children so heedlessly that one by one they

slip away from her into by and forbidden paths until, at length, she appears alone before God. Think you her joy will be like that of the mother who has so trained her household in the sanctities of the Covenant that when she enters heaven she can say, "Here, Lord, am I, and the children whom thou hast given me"?

A Christian man of wealth is so reluctant to part with his treasure at the Master's call that when he enters heaven it is by the narrow margin of a needle's eye; while another, knowing that his possessions are not held by ownership but by stewardship, uses them accordingly, so making for himself friends even of the mammon of unrighteousness; and receiving welcome from them at heaven's gate. It will surely be a different sort of heaven to those men.

Now as to the practical bearing of all this: it makes a great difference in the manner of our present life whether or no we believe in the life further on. It formulates our plans for to-morrow and the next day. It strikes the key-note of our behavior at home, in society, in the shop and

office and market-place; in all our contact with those about us.

In one of the cemeteries of Philadelphia there is a tombstone bearing this epitaph:

THE BODY OF
B. FRANKLIN, PRINTER,
(LIKE THE COVER OF AN OLD BOOK,
ITS CONTENTS TORN OUT
AND STRIPT OF ITS LETTERING AND GILDING)
LIES HERE, FOOD FOR WORMS;
BUT THE WORK SHALL NOT BE LOST:
FOR IT WILL (AS HE BELIEVES) APPEAR ONCE MORE
IN A NEW AND MORE ELEGANT EDITION,
REVISED AND CORRECTED
BY ITS AUTHOR

Thank God for the assurance of the "new edition, revised and corrected by its Author"! Here we rejoice in life, but there — oh, men and women, great things are before us! Now are we sons of God: but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

In addition to the fact that our view of everlasting Life has a practical bearing on life here and now, it must be added that it greatly modifies our conception of death. One who has entered upon the highest life of faith may justly regard death as a mere

line of shadow falling across his way; or to use the words of Longfellow, "a covered bridge, leading from light to light through a brief darkness." Death as a motive is reduced to the vanishing point. Its sting is gone. In fact it is a far more solemn thing to live than to die; for life eternal is what life temporal makes it.

But whether we shall ever attain to life eternal depends on our faith in the Christ who confers it.

In the year 1789 the Bastille fell. It stood for age-old wrong and tyranny. Its walls were forty feet thick. It was filled with prisoners, many of whom had languished there for weary years. The multitudes surged through the streets crying, "Ã la Bastille!" but the old fortress defied them. A man named Tourney, with hatchet in hand, climbed the guard-house, hammered at the great chain, and the draw-bridge fell! The gates were battered down and the prisoners were free. But what of that? There were some who had become so habituated to the gloom and loneliness that they cared for nothing else. The light

bewildered them. The cries of their rescuers frightened them. They would not come out!

The gates of the prison-house of spiritual death are opened, and the voice of the Deliverer calls "Come forth!" But suppose a man will not come out, what then? Of what advantage is living water to a man who will not drink it; or freedom to one who will not accept it?

XVII

RISEN WITH CHRIST

IN the reply of Jesus to those who found fault with his healing the cripple at Bethesda, he appealed to his authority as the indubitable Son of God, saying, "The hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself: so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (R.V.)

He thus teaches that "all" are to be raised from the dead; as Daniel said, "some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt"; and as

John the Evangelist intimated, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

The words of Jesus elsewhere are of the same purport: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

We are led to infer that the Resurrection is to occur at a definite time. This is intimated in his words, "The hour cometh." He speaks also of "the day" and of the "great day." It is, of course, a narrow and

wizened sort of interpretation that would limit this to the small dimensions of a solar day. Let it suffice that there is to be a definite occasion when the multitudinous army of the earth's population shall simultaneously come forth from the sepulchre of the ages.

It is clear also that this is to be a resurrection of the body. Those "who are in their graves" are to come forth. No mode of interpretation can successfully explain away the fact that there is a real connection of some sort between the body that goes into the grave and that which comes out of it. The word "resurrection" is meaningless, except in this view. It will not do to say that there is to be only a spiritual resurrection. Something "rises." What is it? We do not affirm that every atom which enters into the physical frame is to be used in the structure of the resurrection body; but at the least we are bound to insist that the body which is laid away in the grave furnishes the germ of that which shall be.

Of like import were the words of comfort

which Jesus addressed to the bereaved sisters of Lazarus: "Thy brother shall rise again." When Martha replied, "I know that he shall rise again at the last day," he said with deeper emphasis, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Now while these words contain a side reference to that spiritual resurrection which is here and now in the revivifying of souls dead in trespasses and sins, they have also a distinct bearing on the final resurrection. The miracle at the grave of Lazarus was a foregleam and prophecy of that which is to occur at the Great Day.

The man who could create a blade of grass would demonstrate his power to make a meadow. The scientist who in his laboratory could mould a single luminous sphere, develop it to massive proportions and fling it out upon its orbit in infinite space, would prove his power to make a universe. By the same token he who raised Lazarus from the dead gave evidence of his ability to quicken all who sleep in God's Acre.

The complement of that miracle at

Bethany is in the vision of Ezekiel: "The hand of the Lord set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones; and lo, they were very dry. He said unto me, 'Can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, Thou knowest.' Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live! So I prophesied as he commanded me; . . . and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (Ez. 34:1–10).

It is impossible to emphasize too deeply the vital connection between the physical resurrection of Jesus and our own. "If we be dead with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him." He is "the first born from the dead" (Col. 1:18). "He should be the first that should rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23). We do not affirm that his resurrection is the effective cause of ours; but its evidential value is immeasurable. The assurance of our resurrection is in the fact that *he* "brake the bands of death."

In Christ as the firstfruits of God's Acre we have a definite prophecy of the full ingathering. Sir Walter Raleigh, on the night before his execution, strengthened his faith against the hour of dissolution in these words: "I have recalled the wisdom of Plato and Socrates in vain; my only assurance is in the resurrection of Christ." And that same night he wrote on the fly-leaf of his prayer-book:

"E'en such is time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys and all we have,
And pays us back in sordid dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
When we have lived out all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days.
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God will raise me up, I trust!"

Not bold enough! Not positive enough! "I trust?" Nay, blessed be God for certainty. I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth; and because he liveth, I shall live also. There is no room for doubt or question or misgiving. The stone is rolled away. The problem is solved. The clouds are lifted

from before the sun. Life and immortality are brought to light.

We walk among the sepulchres of our beloved in the confident hope of meeting them again and renewing the ties of our earthly life. There is no waste in the divine economy. There is no failure. There are no broken columns and quenched torches of life. There are no heaven-inspired plans that come to naught. "Does death end all?" Nay, life here is but the vestibule of life forever.

We lay away our loved ones in the tomb, saying, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust"; but, blessed be God! we look for the general resurrection and the life of the world to come through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose advent the earth and the sea shall give up their dead and the corruptible bodies of them that sleep in him shall be made like unto his own glorious body.

Above all the weeping of these that mourn we hear the triumphant voice of One who says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

XVIII

IS THE RESURRECTION PAST?

IN the Church at Ephesus there were two men, Hymenaeus and Philetus, who taught that "the resurrection is past already." If they craved notoriety they surely have it, for they are embalmed in Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, like flies in amber, as "profane and vain babblers, who overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:16–18).

The reason why they were thus pilloried was because they were dishonest men. As teachers in the Ephesian church they had entered into a solemn covenant — as ministers now do at their ordination — to maintain and defend certain truths, prominent among which was the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. To that covenant these men were untrue: wherefore by all the standards of common life they were dishonest men.

But if they wanted to be talked about

they took the proper course. They turned their backs on the old-time religion and became advocates of Gnosticism, which was a grotesque attempt to blend pagan philosophy with the doctrine of Christ. It was the "New Thought" of those days. Of course their teaching made a stir. Nothing is so cheaply and vulgarly sensational as heresy.

If I were to deny the Resurrection in my pulpit today there would be a swarm of reporters at my study to-morrow morning; and next Sunday the church would be thronged to the doors by people with itching ears. And, strange to tell, there would be hard-headed business men among them, proud of their personal honesty and boastful of the fact that their word is as good as their bond, who would applaud me for my courage in doing that abominable thing. Some would call it courage. Courage, forsooth! It requires no courage to play to the galleries; the highest courage is to stand for conviction, and to be foursquare in honesty when the winds of popular favor are blowing the other way.

"But," you say, "Hymenaeus and Philetus did not deny the resurrection of the dead." True, not directly so; they simply affirmed that it "was past already": which was a practical and effectual denial of it. What they said was, "We believe in a spiritual resurrection which answers the necessity of the case." The statement was specious and plausible, and therefore doubly false because it was based on a splendid truth.

For there is a spiritual resurrection here and now. It occurs when a man by accepting Christ comes forth out of spiritual death into newness of life. Paul himself taught this; as where he says, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins"; and again, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:1–6). This is merely an echo of Christ's own teaching where he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth

my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." And again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming *and now is* when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). The reference here is obviously not to the general resurrection but to a resurrection here and now.

There are two kinds of people in the world: the dead and the living. The dead are such as have passed under the sentence of the offended law and have not been delivered from it; the living are such as, having accepted the call of Jesus and received the benefit of his expiatory passion, have passed from death unto life. They dwell among the spiritually dead, but are alive unto God.

The Christians of Ephesus were concerned to know what had become of their friends who had passed over, among whom were not a few who for their loyalty to the Gospel had "climbed the steep ascent to heaven mid peril, toil and pain." Now

Christ had said, "In my father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Home, sweet home! Blessed day of the reunion and handclasping! But if the dead rise not, "they which have fallen asleep are perished." If they survive at all, it is in some Nirvana of unconscious absorption in the Infinite, or in the immeasurable ether where as disembodied spirits they live drearily and are forever unrecognizable. Well does Paul exclaim, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ Jesus, we are of all men most miserable"; for the dream of "the home-bringing" is pricked like a bubble and vanishes into thin air.

But still, so far as the practical uses of common life are concerned, what difference does it make whether the doctrine of the physical resurrection is true or not?

It appears, from Paul's reference to Hymenaeus and Philetus, that it makes all the difference between a safe voyage and going down at sea. For these men, he says, had not only "made shipwreck"

of their own faith, but had overthrown the faith of some. Their teaching had eaten like a gangrene, consuming not only the very bone and fibre of their own Christian life, but that of others over whom their influence fell. For "no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself" in this world of ours.

A man is like a beacon, shining for good or ill; and every Christian is under bonds so to shine that others may see his good works and glorify God. A buoy that had been placed near a dangerous rock on the Atlantic coast was moved from its position by a passing storm. Was that a matter of slight importance? "The City of Portland" came by, and, misled by the buoy, shifted her course and struck a ledge, going down with a hundred souls. No follower of Christ, minister or layman, can drift from his moorings without dragging others after him.

For these reasons we affirm our belief in the resurrection of the body. There is, indeed, a spiritual resurrection, which by the grace of God is "past already" for

many of us. It occurs at the moment when one enters into fellowship with Christ by accepting his overtures of life eternal on the sole condition of faith in him.

But there is another resurrection which is coming — coming by the guaranty of the Yea and Amen of God; and when that occurs, all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth. The pledge of that final resurrection is in the Yea and Amen of him who from his high throne in Heaven has said: "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of death and hell!"

I do not pretend to explain the mystery of the resurrection. It would not be a miracle if I were able to explain it. Nor could I believe in God were he incapable of doing things beyond my ken. But this I know: the word of the Lord cannot be gainsaid; and the things that are impossible with men are possible with him.

XIX

OUR RESURRECTION BODY

THERE was a difference of opinion among the Corinthians as to this matter. All alike believed in immortality, since Christ in his Gospel had brought life and immortality to light; but whether the dead were to preserve their identity so as to be recognizable in heaven was another question. And some of the philosophers in Corinth had much to say against it.

It was this difference of opinion that called forth the wonderful "Pisgah Chapter" in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God:

because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

At this point comes an interruption: some man will say, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Paul answers this skeptic with apparent impatience; the expression, "thou fool," however, is too strong; it should be "thou feeble thinker," or "thou unreasonable man." The answer is couched in the form of a parable.

THE PARABLE OF THE GRAIN

A farmer goes into his field with an apronful of wheat and scatters it. Does the grain perish? Nay, after a season of burial, behold a waving harvest! It has come forth in newness of life. Is this a mystery! Surely; no less and no greater than the resurrection of the dead. But

we are ever confronted by mystery when we come into the presence of God.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

The Sadducees were not alone in their suggestion of practical "absurdities" in this doctrine. The free-thinkers of our time speak in precisely the same way. A man is eaten by a lion; the lion dies in the desert and his carcass fertilizes the roots of a palm-tree; a troop of Bedouins coming that way gather the dates of the palm and carry them to the uttermost parts of the earth; is it to be supposed, now, that the scattered atoms of that dead man are to be reassembled in the great day? But why not? Is the God who created the body out of nothing unable to reconstruct it? Can he who originally lit the flame not rekindle it? His wisdom and power are immeasurable. "Ye do err, not knowing the power of God!"

In this Parable of the Grain of Wheat a clear light is thrown upon all the difficulties that beset the question, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" The grain of wheat is itself the parable and exposition of resurrection.

In the first place, this grain of wheat does not really die. It is not annihilated, even though the animating germ may be destroyed within it. For the conservation of matter is scientifically as true as the conservation of force.

But the analogy of the Parable holds so far only as the vital germ is conserved. In this case, that which is apparently death is the very assurance of life; as Jesus said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

In our mortal bodies are possibilities of life which cannot be realized here and now. The body must pass through mortality before it can attain to the glory of immortality. It must "shuffle off this mortal coil," as the grain lays aside its husk, before it can truly enter into life.

Thus we interpret the words of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The salvation wrought by Christ includes the redemption of the body; it is not the soul only but the whole man that enters through him into the glory of the endless life.

And again, the grain of wheat comes forth from the ground.

It is buried, lost to sight for a while: and then it reappears. There it is; first a spear of tender green, then a sturdy stalk shooting up into the light.

The body reappears in like manner. The trumpet shall sound; and all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth.

Then, the stalk that issues from the sepulchre of the grain is not merely a reduplication of it.

"That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be." If a statue be destroyed, the artist may produce a

replica which is an exact facsimile of it. Not so, however, is the resurrection of the body. It does not come forth cast in the same mold. As the grain becomes a stalk bearing the burden of a thousand grains; as the bushel of wheat becomes a harvest to feed the hunger of a multitude, so is the contrast between the body laid away in the sepulchre and that which issues from it.

Next, the resurrection body will be a spiritual body.

It must needs be adjusted to the conditions of its higher life; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

(1) "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory."

The dishonor of the fleshly body is due wholly to sin; and there will be no sin in the kingdom of God. Nor will there be any of the sorrows that attend upon it. "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

Nature is full of analogies. A worm, in the process of its life, weaves a shroud and builds its own sepulchre. In that

place of burial it becomes a semi-translucent thing. Is it dead? There is no trace of its former life, save the vital germ or principle within it. The tomb opens and a winged creature comes forth! Behold not a worm, but a butterfly with wings of glory, living in the sun. Once it crawled; now it flies. It fed on earthly things; now on the ambrosia and nectar of a thousand gardens. Its home was in the dust; now in the air.

(2) "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."

The body must needs be raised in power in order to be fitted to its nobler sphere. For its greater tasks in heaven clearer eyes will be needed and stronger hands. It must no longer be hampered by the limitations of time and space.

Paul was a man of small stature and "weak presence"; was afflicted with "a thorn in the flesh"; but his faith in the resurrection inspired the hope of better things. He could say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an

house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; for we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Our tasks are often wearisome by reason of the infirmities of the flesh; but in heaven we shall be equipped with powers adequate to the service required of us. It is recorded that, during the captivity in Babylon, a great prayer was made by Daniel for the deliverance of his people; and he says, "Whiles I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sins; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me at about the time of the evening oblation; and he talked with me, saying, 'At the beginning of thy supplication the commandment went forth and I am come to show thee.'" By this we are given to understand that the angel had come all the way from heaven in that very moment of his prayer to answer him! Thus the speed of a wireless message through the vastness of ether was outdone.

Who knows, then, what shall be the multiplied energies of those who, out of fleshly weakness, are made strong in the glory of the endless life?

(3) "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption."

The sure approach of dissolution is written on the face of every living thing. The moment we begin to live we begin to die. But there our bodies shall be endowed with self-perpetuating life. At the threshold of heaven is the Fountain of Perpetual Youth, and all those who wake in Christ shall drink of it.

"The days of our years are three score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is our strength labor and sorrow: for it is soon cut off and we fly away." We are all alike subject to the infirmities of age. "The keepers of the house tremble; the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkened; and the almond tree flourisheth and desire faileth; because man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets." But

in that better country none shall ever say "I am sick." No hearse with sable plumes rolls through the golden streets. There is no death! The redemption of the body is from sin and from all the sorrows that accompany it.

Yet with all these blessed facts, the resurrection body will be the same that was laid away in the grave.

For "to every seed is given its own body." The farmer, after sowing his wheat, goes out and waits for that which shall be. Will he look for rye, or barley? No, but for wheat; always for wheat; because the law of nature is "each after its kind." The seed of the sowing is always recognized in the harvest that is gathered in.

So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. The identity of the body will be preserved because of the vital germ within it. But what do we mean by "identity"? It may be like that of Niagara, where there is a constant change of substance with continuance of form. Or it may refer to sameness of substance, as when you dis-

solve a silver chalice in aqua fortis and, by the use of proper chemicals, recover every particle of it. Or you may have identity without a persistence of either form or substance. My hand is the same as when it rested on my mother's bosom in infancy, yet, since the body is in a constant flux, neither the form nor the substance of that hand is here; yet my mother would recognize it as the same hand and clasp it as once she did.

We cannot, therefore, speak dogmatically in these premises; and particularly as we are in the presence of a great mystery; but by the Parable of the Grain of Wheat we are warranted in saying that in the resurrection the body preserves its identity by virtue of the vital germ of informing principle within it. So far forth the teaching of Scripture is clear. The identical body that is buried shall "come forth." This is involved in the term "resurrection," or rising again. The physical body has a vital connection with the spiritual body, a connection so close as to assure its identity with it.

The point of importance is thus maintained: to wit, that those who come forth in the resurrection shall be recognizable; and to us, as to those Corinthians who lamented their martyred dead, this is a source of immeasurable comfort. We do not sorrow as those who are without hope. We shall greet each other in heaven and renew the memories of our earthly life. O happy day!

XX

HEAVEN: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT IT

IT would be an unspeakable satisfaction if we could look toward one of the stars, as Alcyone of the Pleiades, and say, "Yonder is the great, white throne and the saints triumphant are there, looking down upon us." But we have no such assurance.

One thing, however, we can say with certainty: Heaven is where Christ is. In his farewell prayer for his disciples in the upper room, he says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me."

We are warranted, therefore, in speaking of Heaven as a place. The fact that we cannot locate it makes no difference; it must be *somewhere* because it is where Christ is. It is referred to as a house, a temple, a garden, a "better country, even

an heavenly" and "a city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." These are figures of speech, of course, but none the less do they set forth matters of fact.

It is a holy place. Over its gateway is inscribed, "There shall in nowise enter here any that worketh abomination or maketh a lie." The wedding garment of "fine linen clean and white" which must be assumed by all who attend the marriage feast is "the righteousness of saints." The shame and bondage and penalty of sin are gone forever; and the redeemed are clothed in that holiness without which no man shall see God.

It is a royal place. The Kingdom which has its beginning on earth is consummated in Heaven: as it is written, "They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29).

It is a happy place. Weeping may endure for the night but joy cometh in the morning. In the presence of the King is

fullness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.

It is a place where Christians shall see Christ. We shall see him *hisce oculis* — "with these very eyes!" A man may be in London, yet never see the King of England. He may be entertained as a guest in Windsor Castle, yet never set eyes upon him. We shall not only be where Christ is, but we shall behold him whom having not seen we love; and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In our highest moments of devotion we catch a momentary glimpse of Christ; as when on the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples saw his face shining and his garments white and glistering. This, however, is only to behold him "as in a glass darkly"; but there we shall see him face to face.

And it is a place where those who believe in him shall be like him. "Now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we

shall see him as he is." It is a proverb that those who are long associated in common affairs grow to resemble one another. John Anderson and his guid wife, who "climb the hill thegither," show in their faces the long blending of their happy lives. "What rare and precious substance art thou?" asked a wise man of a pebble which exhaled a strange fragrance. "I am only a pebble," it answered, "but I have lain at the root of a rose-tree." Thus by long companionship with Jesus, as friends and followers, we must of necessity catch somewhat of his beauty of holiness and grow into some measure of his likeness.

It is a place where they shall behold his glory. "Father, I will," he said, "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." His disciples had known him as a carpenter with chips and shavings around his feet; as a weary wayfarer with nowhere to lay his head; as a teacher rejected of men; they were presently to see him upon the throne of Heaven with angels and archangels bowing and veiling their faces before him.

It is, also, a place where saints are to participate in the glory of their Saviour. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit together with me on my throne." The mother of the Sons of Thunder asked that one of them might sit on the right hand of Jesus and the other on the left in his Kingdom; and though that was refused, as being impossible during the earthly life, a greater distinction awaited them. For so it is written! "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12); "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17); and Peter tells us that if we partake of his sufferings, we shall also be glad with exceeding joy.

It is clear, therefore, that a great surprise awaits us; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

"O, could I see as indeed they be,
The glories of Heaven that compass me,

I should lightly hold the tissued fold
Of that marvellous curtain of blue and gold;
But soon the whole, like a parchment scroll,
Shall before my mazed sight uproll,
And without a screen, at one burst be seen,
The Presence wherein I had ever been."

The Heaven of our hopes is a place where the redeemed shall know each other in Christ and renew the associations of their earthly life. "In my Father's house are many mansions," said Jesus; "if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). The reason the word "house" was used in this passage is because there was no word for home in the Greek or Aramaic tongue. We have here the prophecy of the final reunion of saints. For home is more than four walls and a sheltering roof; it is more than beauty of decoration; it is above everything the society of loved ones.

With all these happy conditions, our longed-for Home cannot fail to be a place of never-ending bliss. The last interview of Jesus with his disciples in the upper room was concluded with the words,

"Arise, let us go hence." Thus all the sweet conferences of earth are broken up. Thus all life's chapters of affection end. Thus from our earthly homes the dear ones vanish one by one. But ere long the disciples of Jesus met again in that upper room; they saw his face and renewed their fellowship with him. So shall we meet and know each other in the heavenly throne and "go no more out forever." The friends from whom we have parted for a little while have already entered into the inheritance of their risen Lord. God's Acre is the King's garden; and the dew of those that sleep is as the dew of herbs.

"With thy rude plowshare, Death, turn up the sod,
And spread the furrow of the seed we sow;
This is the field and Acre of our God;
This is the place where human harvests grow."

And, finally, Heaven is an assured place, "Father, *I will*," said Jesus. Here is a vast departure from the common terminology of prayer. These are imperious words. In order to understand them we must consider the complex nature of Christ. As the God-man he had a dual

self-consciousness in which there was a perfect coöperation of the divine with the human will. Now we observe the repression of one, then of the other; as when the shadow of the cross fell coldly over him and he cried, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour! but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name!" And again in Gethsemane where once and again he put away the purple cup, only to lift it again to his lips in "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." So in this sacerdotal prayer he pleads with all majestic humility, even as other suppliants, until he reaches the farewell word; then all the power of Godhead stands forth to utter a manifesto as from a throne: "*I will* that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me!"

In this sublime passage we have an intimation of the all-prevailing character of his heavenly intercession. The High Priest of the olden time bore the names of Israel upon his ephod when he entered the Holy

of Holies to make intercession for them; but our great Mediator has our names written upon the palms of his hands, and in our behalf he lifts them in heaven with that omnipotent word, "Father, I will!"

The decree has gone forth. We are given to Christ as the fruit of the travail of his soul. "These shall be to him for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." He has willed our entrance into heaven; wherefore again we may confidently say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

All this because by triumphing over death our Saviour showed his power to save. All this because he ever liveth to make intercession for us. All this because he is present with us — if we will have it so — every moment of every day. We walk safely and surely toward the gate of heaven when we walk with him.

There was a world of wisdom in a lad's way of telling the story of Enoch: "He used to take long walks with God; and

one day he walked with him a long, long ways; so that when evening came God said, 'Enoch, we are far from your home; you had better come in now and stay with me.'"

Blessed are they who thus, at nightfall, enter in to abide with him.

XXI

OUR FRIENDS OVER THERE

A LETTER from a sorrowing wife lies before me. "Do you suppose," she asks, "that my dear husband can be alive and happy anywhere in the universe without knowing my circumstances and wanting to help me?"

It is useless to speculate in these premises. Dreaming will not help us. Even Reason is an untrustworthy guide save in the companionship of Faith; for here we cross the border into the province of the unseen and eternal of which it is written, "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." With this in mind we shall avoid the error of those who profess to call back the spirits of the departed and converse with them at will, engaging them in foolish performances with lights turned down, such as ringing bells in closed cabinets and tipping tables and knocking on

hollow walls, or murmuring frivolities beneath the level of dull scholars in our grammar schools. This is grotesque; it is hideous and abhorrent to common sense, since, whatever change may have been wrought in our beloved by their transition to the spiritual world, they are certainly not more foolish than when they dwelt among us. And whatever may be their ministries on earth, we have no reason to believe that they can be summoned at pleasure or conversed with at will. The purpose of their earthly visitation is not to gratify curiosity, but to serve our best interests with reference to the future life.

Therefore to the Law and the Testimony. What say the Scriptures? We are on safe ground when we stand upon a "Thus saith the Lord." "Here is the judge that ends our strife when wit and reason fail."

To begin with, heaven is represented as a place peopled by angels and spirits of just men made perfect. In the vision of John the Evangelist he saw "a great multitude which no man could number standing before the throne, clothed in white

robes with palms in their hands, crying, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!'" Intimations like these abound all through the Book from beginning to end.

There is furthermore a clear announcement as to the nature of these heavenly beings. They are of different orders and gradations, even as "one star differeth from another star in glory." There are angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim, and saints triumphant, but they are all alike in their perfect adjustment to the conditions of the spiritual life.

Who are these "angels"? It is often taught and generally supposed that they are a distinct order of beings, wholly apart and different from the human race. I do not believe that; nor do I believe that any Scriptural basis can be found for it. Objection has been made to the Sunday School hymn, "I want to be an angel," on the ground that it expresses a desire after the unattainable, which would be a valid criticism if angels and saints triumphant

were different in kind. In fact, however, the term "angels" is used to characterize all the inhabitants of heaven. So far as we are informed there is only one race of spiritual beings in the universe, and it embraces all who have ever been created in the likeness of God.

True, it is written of man, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" (Psa. 8:5); but in this instance the word used is *Elohim*, and the passage is properly rendered in the Revised Version, "Thou hast made him a little lower than God." It is true, also, that man in his mundane life is lower than the inhabitants of the celestial world; but Christ himself affirms that this inferiority is removed by death, when he says, "They are equal unto the angels and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36).

The host of heaven may consist, for aught we know, of multitudes from other worlds as well as from our own. Among them there are different orders, indicated by such titles as angels and archangels,

cherubim and seraphim, authorities, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. But this fact does not prove any racial distinction any more than does the existence of ranks and titled orders among men. All are alike in having been created as rational beings after the divine image. Some have never been defiled with sin, having "kept their first estate"; others are sinners saved by grace. "One family they dwell in him."

All alike are free from the limitations of mundane life. They are equipped with faculties and capacities that we can scarcely imagine — we who are "cabined, cribbed, confined" in this tabernacle of flesh. The Psalmist says that they "excel in strength." They know no weakness or weariness. Being without sin they are free from all the ills that human flesh is heir to. And this is the glory that by God's grace shall yet be revealed in us!

"There the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet;
While the anthems of glory unceasingly roll
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul."

Still further we are advised as to their occupations. John Flavel said, "They have two offices: *superius canere, inferius vigilare*"; that is, to sing in heaven and keep watch on earth. Thus they rest not day or night from doing the divine will.

It is a mistake to imagine that the inhabitants of heaven have nothing to do but play on golden harps and sing "Holy, Holy, Holy." Their particular business is ministry, as it is written, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation?" This brings the truth very near to us.

If we open the Old Testament at the account of the creation, we shall hear the morning stars singing together and all the sons of god shouting for joy. And as we turn the pages we hear them singing and shouting all along the way. An angel leads the children of Israel on their journey through the wilderness; and in battle angels and ministers of grace defend them. An angel visits Abraham as he sits at Mamre in the doorway of his tent. Another speaks to Gideon as he is flailing

behind the wine-press. When Jacob in despondency lies down at Luz with his head pillowed upon a stone, he sees a ladder of light on which angels are ascending with his prayers and coming down with blessings upon him. Daniel is befriended by angels in the den of lions. They minister to Elijah at the brook and hover above him in the beleaguered city of Dothan, so that he beholds "the mountains full of chariots and horses." They appear to Moses at the burning bush and thenceforth never forsake him. They come to Hagar and her famishing child when sinking with weariness in the desert, and open her ears to the rippling of a brook; whereupon she calls the place Beer-lahai-roi, that is, "Thou God seest me." The time would fail us to tell of the ancient worthies who in like manner received messages through angels from the throne of God.

Now open the New Testament and you shall straightway hear again the rustling of wings. An angel brings the annunciation to the virgin mother. The aged Zacharias waiting in the Temple and hoping against

hope is assured — by the same Gabriel who had brought a like message to Daniel five hundred years before — that the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. Out on the plains of Judea the shepherds awake to hear a multitude of the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

As Christ sets out upon his ministry angels go with him. At the close of his temptation in the wilderness they minister to him. In the Mount of Transfiguration he receives two heavenly visitors who, though they had died five hundred years apart, are acquainted with each other and show their familiarity with mundane affairs by conversing with Jesus of "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." An angel strengthened him in the hour of his garden agony. There were angels hovering over his Cross; else why had he just previously said to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into his place. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than

twelve legions of angels?" Angels rolled away the stone from his sepulchre and announced his resurrection. A convoy of angels attended him when through the open heavens he returned to "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." Had the ears of the disciples been opened, they might have heard them shouting, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in!" As it was, they were addressed by two men in shining apparel, saying: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"; that is, in the clouds of heaven and all the holy angels with him.

Nor did these celestial visits cease with the ascension of Christ. The apostles in their subsequent work were enheartened in the same way. When Peter was in prison an angel came to him saying, "Rise up quickly"; and straightway his chains fell off. When Philip the Evangelist was preaching in Samaria an angel bade him

arise and go down to Gaza along the desert road. And the time would fail me to tell of Paul and Cornelius and others who were thus guided and safeguarded along the journey of life.

The very name "angel" is significant of ministry. It means literally, a messenger or one sent forth. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" It was the belief of Cardinal Newman that our world is everywhere pervaded by spirits who are sent hither as divine agents, not only in spiritual matters, nor only in the directing of social and political affairs, but even in the control of the elements; as it is written, "He maketh his angels winds, his ministers a flaming fire" (R. V.). Without going so far, we are bound to affirm, as the consistent teaching of Scripture, that they are sent out everywhere as willing servants to do the divine will.

But for the most part this is ancient history. Are these ministries for us? Yes,

if we are "heirs of salvation." It is true that inasmuch as we have the Scriptures, there is no such need of angel communications as in the olden time. He who formerly "spake at sundry times and in divers manners, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"; and "If the Word spoken by angels was steadfast, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" But although we are no longer under the necessity of communicating with God through intermediate beings, this does not affect the reality or the importance of their ministerial office.

Our loved ones who have been translated to heaven are as deeply concerned in our welfare as ever. Otherwise why are we informed that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"? Or why are we warned by the Lord against the putting of stumbling blocks in the way of children, since "their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven"?

The familiar picture of a little pilgrim walking all unconscious of danger along the edge of a precipice while a guardian angel follows with hands laid upon his shoulders, was not drawn with a pencil dipped in mere imagination. Blessed be God for the assurance that he is thus solicitous for the welfare of the least of his little ones!

"Which of the petty kings of earth
Can boast a guard like ours,
Encircled from our second birth
By all the heavenly powers?
With them we march securely on,
Throughout Immanuel's ground;
And not an uncommissioned stone
Our sacred feet shall wound.
Ten thousand offices unseen
For us they gladly do,
Deliver in the lion's den
And safe escort us through.
And when our spirits we resign,
On outstretched wings they bear
And lodge us in the arms divine,
And lead us ever there."

Those who are "heirs of salvation" are not forgotten in the article of death. It is written of Lazarus that he was "carried

by angels to Abraham's bosom"; that is, to the innermost place of heaven. What was the light that shone upon the face of Stephen when he "fell on sleep" amid a shower of stones? He saw heaven opened and the Son of Man standing to welcome him; and those who witnessed against him testified that they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Not once but again and again have I seen that light on the faces of God's people as they passed on — the light of heavenly vision and of the joyful recognition of loved ones.

It is scarcely necessary to repeat that this doctrine of the guardianship of angels must be received with salutary caution. For that matter, all spiritual truths must be safeguarded by a just interpretation of the Word. The first Adam fell by yielding to an innuendo against the Word; and the Second Adam was tempted to misinterpret it: "If thou be the very Son of God, cast thyself down from this pinnacle of the Temple and prove it; for is it not written, 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee and in their hands they

shall bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone'?" No one knows better how to twist Scripture into base uses than the prince of the power of the air.

The same truth is perverted by false teachers in some quarters, to bring us into wrong relations with the angels. In Paul's letter to the Christians of Colosse he says, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." The office of these celestial beings is not intercessory but ministerial. We have one Mediator, even Jesus Christ the righteous. At the close of John's apocalyptic visions, when he would have fallen down to worship before the feet of the angel who had revealed them, he was thus admonished: "See thou do it not; I am thy fellow servant; worship God."

This, however, does not affect the assurance of their continued ministry. So far forth, the Scriptures are perfectly clear; and we are always safe when we steer by the chart. We are never safe in eliminating aught of that which is written or in adding one jot or tittle to it.

But what profit is there in clarifying this Scriptural truth? Much every way. For one thing, it assures us that we are living in a good world with a good God over it. He is round about us with his Providence. He has sent his only begotten Son into the world for our salvation. And in addition to all this, he has provided for our care by the present ministry of friends who have passed on before us.

For another thing it gives us to understand that we are living in a larger world than that beneath our feet. Our life leans over upon the infinite. No mortal vision can measure it.

Furthermore we are thus advised as to the probationary character of our present life. "I paint for eternity" said Zeuxis, when asked to account for his attention to details. In like manner Paul writes: "Seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

He was thinking of the Olympian games. The athletes are standing at the crimson line. The galleries are full of spectators on every side, eagerly watching. We are not running unheeded. All heaven is thronged with celestial beings looking down upon us. Wherefore, "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before," let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The crown of righteousness which fadeth not away is uplifted in his hands. The golden milestone is before us; and, with every sinew tense and the light of heaven in our eyes, we may hear the echoes of a song we sang long, long ago:

"Bright in that happy land beams every eye;
Kept by a Father's hand, love cannot die.
Oh then to a glory run, be a crown and kingdom won;
And bright above the sun, reign, reign for aye!"

The supreme lesson, after all, is not the interest felt by the angels in our behalf but the sympathy of our divine Lord who sends them to minister in that way. This

was the thought which most deeply impressed Jacob after his vision of angels at Bethel: "Verily, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!" He was a lone wanderer, a fugitive from justice, a sinner oppressed with a sense of present retribution; and, lo! God loved him and sent his angels to comfort and encourage him.

O gracious God, we wander not beyond the tether of thy love! Awake us from indifference, break our stubborn hearts with the conviction of thy loving care. O thou blessed Son of God, who not only sendest thine angels to allure us from sin to salvation, but thyself standest at the closed door of our hearts, knocking and waiting until thy locks are wet with the drops of night, we surrender to thy love! We unbolt the door! Come in and sup with us!

XXII

THE SAVIOUR'S WORK IN THE LIGHT OF HIS RESURRECTION

IT is written that Jesus came into our world "to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18: 11). All else that he ever did was subsidiary to this great purpose. And his "signs and wonders" were in evidence to prove that he was able to save unto the uttermost all who would come unto him.

He showed his supernatural power over nature in turning water into wine at Cana; in the multiplication of the loaves; and subsequently in stilling the tempest, and walking on the sea. He showed his supernatural power as a physician in healing not merely functional but organic diseases; palsy with a word, blindness with a touch, hemorrhage by contact with the fringe of his garment, leprosy with a wave of his

hand; crowning all by thrice raising the dead.

The purpose of these miracles was to vindicate his Messianic claims, and thus to demonstrate his power to save. He set forth that purpose clearly on various occasions, as when he answered the cavillers at the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum: "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house."

It thus appears that such works were merely incidental and contributory to his supreme work. They rang the bell to call attention to his redeeming grace. It was, I repeat, a matter of relatively slight importance for the Son of Man to heal a few blind men and lepers and paralytics in a world full of them; but it was a matter of supreme importance that a world full of sinners should be made to understand that he had power to forgive sin.

So far as immediate results were concerned there was not much to show for his earthly life. He claimed to be the Saviour

of the world; yet the scene of his operations was the smallest of small parishes in a remote and insignificant province, and his ministry was confined to a period of three brief years. By that time he had gathered about him a few hundred followers — "a feeble folk like the conies" — to whom he bade farewell, saying, "It is expedient for you that I go away." Why?

Had he failed? Was his great enterprise a fiasco? No; on the contrary, he had prepared the way for universal conquest; but as a rule the hands that lay the foundations do not rear the superstructure of empires. The great men of history have always had to "go away" in order to wield the full measure of their influence. The living among us are the dead. The men who dominate our affairs are not those who stand in the lime-light with a trumpet at their lips, but those who sleep in God's Acre, many of them unwept, unhonored, and unsung. The influence of Jesus while he sojourned as a man among men was inconsiderable as compared with that which he was destined to exert. He had suc-

ceeded in gathering a little group of fishermen and other humble folk about him, and that apparently was all. His announced plan was to revolutionize history and turn the world upside down; and this meagre following was all he had to show for it!

All bodily presence is weak. It seemed impossible for Jesus even to impress upon his disciples an adequate thought of his divine nature and authority so long as they were able to say, "Behold, he is with us and one of us." One night while they were rowing across the Sea of Galilee a storm fell suddenly upon them and they were overwhelmed with fear. What now was their master's power to them? He was three miles away! So sensuous was their belief in him that it reached only to their finger tips. For their sake, therefore, as well as for the world's sake, he must vanish out of their sight; like Lycurgus who, having prepared a code of laws for Sparta, and perceiving that his personal presence was a hindrance to the just observance of that code, disappeared mysteriously and never was seen again among

men. But he left his influence behind him. It was because he found the fulcrum of his lever outside the world that the name of Lycurgus is mentioned among the great law-givers of the world today.

Two things were necessary to the ultimate success of the earthly ministry of Christ. One was that he must die, and in dying, pay the ransom of the world's sin; the other was that he must rise again and show himself the "death of death and hell's destruction." The way would thus be cleared for his triumphant march onward to the Golden Age.

And so it proved. No sooner was it announced that Jesus had risen from the dead than the fires of persecution were kindled against those who followed him. One by one, scores by scores, hundreds by hundreds, they ascended in burning chariots to heaven. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." They multiplied by thousands, for so it had been prophesied, "Of the increase of his government there shall be no end."

The outward expansion of the Kingdom

is set forth in the parable of the Mustard Seed, which is indeed the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it becometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof (Matt. 13:31). Its inward extension, or intensiveness, is set forth in the parable of the Leaven, "which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened" (Matt. 13:33). The Kingdom groweth as an harvest whose garnering is sure. Let us not be impatient; the wheat and the tares must grow together, but the reapers shall separate them (Matt. 13:24–30). The invitations to the supper of the King's Son have gone forth into all the world, and however many may refuse, the wedding shall finally be furnished with guests (Matt. 22:1–11).

All history verifies the prophecy of the ultimate triumph of the King. The hands on heaven's dial move not backward. With every passing day the rolling world sweeps farther into light. The most impressive figure in history is that of Immanuel riding down through the centuries.

He sets forth at the beginning with a paltry retinue of eleven men. The fires of persecution are kindled in vain. At the end of the first century five hundred thousand rally at his call. Fiercer and hotter grow the fires. The kings of the earth take counsel against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." He that sitteth in the heavens laughs! The tenth century closes, and there are fifty millions following the King. Then fall the shadows of the Dark Ages. It seems now as if faith has perished from the earth. The church fights foolishly for an empty sepulchre, or busies itself in illuminating missals and breviaries while the world is dying in sin. But at the close of the fifteenth century the darkness lifts, and, lo! there are a hundred million who proclaim their loyalty to Christ. Then comes the historic epoch of infidelity, moving on to a horrid climax in the vaporings of the Encyclopedia and the Reign of Terror, when Thomas Paine puts forth his "Age of Reason" and Voltaire exclaims,

"I will go through Christ's forest and girdle every tree until not a sapling shall remain to him." Nevertheless at the close of the eighteenth century two hundred millions are followers of Christ. Then comes the Missionary Epoch. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings . . . that saith unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth!" The nineteenth century closes, and, lo! there are five hundred millions of people who acknowledge the supremacy of Christ. And still the royal standards forward go.

Are there no set-backs? None. The army of the King advances over an undulating country, now and then lost to view in a dip among the hills, such as are called Dark Ages, but issuing again in Renaissances and Reformations and always farther on.

It was not for nothing that Christ triumphed over death and hell. Not in vain does he sit regnant in heaven. His work on earth is like the onward flow of a river, with men standing here and there

along its banks watching the frequent eddies and saying with a lamentable voice, "Alas, it flows backward!" while the river calmly pursues its course, onward, ever onward toward a boundless sea.

It is written of Christ that "he went everywhere preaching the Kingdom." His enemies said, "Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar," but that did not appal him. At his trial Pilate asked, "Art thou a king, then?" and Jesus answered, "Thou sayest it." To a like challenge by the High Priest in the Sanhedrim he gave a similar answer, adding, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." These are stupendous claims; nay, more, they are simply grotesque unless the logic of events shall prove them.

It is related of Napoleon that when in Saint Helena he said to General Bertrand:[1] "You tell me that Jesus was only a man. Explain, then, his influence in the world

[1] The words of Napoleon are here abbreviated, but no liberties are taken with "the dead hand."

today. Here am I — who dreamed, like Caesar and Alexander, of universal empire — an exile in a lonely island with none so poor as to do me reverence, while the dead hand of this Jesus, stretched across the centuries, can summon an army of hundreds of millions to support him." The power of that dead hand has been an unsolvable problem to men wiser than Napoleon, even to undevout chroniclers like Hume and Gibbon, who rejecting Christ from the philosophy of history have found a hopeless skein of threads and thrums. That power can only be accounted for by the fact that the hand was not a dead but a living hand, since Christ who was dead liveth and is alive forevermore and from his high place in heaven wields the destinies of nations and the children of men.

But what shall be said of recent events? Behold confusion worse confounded! International wars — internecine wars — chaos and disorder everywhere! Is that all? Have ye never read how chaos comes before cosmos; how revolutions come before

republics; how tempests clear the air? Progress always travails to the birth.

Two tremendous facts have emerged from the chaos of the World's War. On the one hand the age-old evils of absolutism have died the death. The Caesars have lost their sceptres and, unless all omens fail, have lost them forever. "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." And, on the other hand, the people are coming into their own. True, they have not arrived as yet. Today they are feeding swine like mobs of prodigals in the land of famine, but to-morrow they will come to themselves and move on to better things. The armies of the world are returning to their homes. Swordsmen and spearmen are on their way to fallow fields with plows and pruning hooks. The skies are clearing and everything betokens a better day.

Be it remembered that at the beginning of the Christian era there were no "people." Rome ruled the world and a mere handful of patricians ruled Rome. All the rest were despised plebeians and abject slaves.

Better a universal riot of men blindly, desperately struggling for their rights than a race of cowards building pyramids for Pharaohs! I hate the very thought of Bolshevism; but better a maddened mob of anarchists than a nation of serfs whining and dying under the knout without the courage to resist it! "The north wind makes vikings." All men deplore the welter of blood; but there are worse calamities than bloodshed. An outburst of madness may yield to treatment; but the sleeping sickness is unto death.

Would you have a sign from heaven? The Master gives it: "At evening ye say, it will be fair weather; for the sky is red." Shall the signs of the weather be more easily interpreted than the signs of the times? Lift up your eyes and see! Never were the skies so red as now; and never has there been a brighter promise of a better day.

The campaign of the Kingdom is on. It began at the Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus met his disciples before his ascension, saying, "All power is given unto

me in heaven and on earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." In pursuance of that commission the royal standards onward go. On those standards is the symbol of the cross, and over it the superscription, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore." His work is not in vain! The hands on the King's dial move not backward. The consummation of the great enterprise will be the setting up of his Kingdom, when every knee shall bow before him.

It is recorded that when Saladin, the bold leader of the Moslems in the Third Crusade, was on his death-bed, he bade his attendants hang his shroud upon the outer walls of his palace and cry aloud, "This is all that remains of Saladin the Great who hoped to conquer the world!" The empty shroud in the sepulchre of Christ meant conquest, not defeat; it meant that death had no more dominion over him. Thus Peter and his companions interpreted it. No more did they say, "We go a-fishing." Thenceforth, in pur-

suance of their original call, they were fishers of men. With their faith thus fortified they were ready to face all danger in the service of their living Lord.

So do we find our strength and courage in the assurance that from his high place he leads and blesses those who follow him. "Go, labor on; spend and be spent!" Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. He lives, and because he liveth we shall live also. Wherefore, let those who have entered into the fellowship of this glorious hope seek those things which are above, where Christ — the ever living and reigning Christ — sitteth at the right hand of God.

XXIII

OUR GREATER WORKS

IN his last memorable interview with his disciples in the upper room Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter" — which is the Holy Ghost — "will not come unto you"; and in the same connection he gave them a wonderful promise, to wit, that in the power of the Holy Ghost they would be able to do greater works than his!

What are those "greater works"?

He surely did not refer to miracles of healing, for, although the Twelve were equipped with special gifts known as charismata, by which they were able to accomplish signs and wonders, and which were obviously needful in the infancy of the church, it would scarcely be claimed that their miracles of this sort were "greater" than his.

If any man claims that in pursuance of

this promise, he is invested with the ability to work such miracles, let him stand forth and vindicate that claim or else forever hold his peace. Let him come down to the shore of the sea and bid the tempest be still so that its crested billows shall come sobbing, like naughty children, to his feet. Can he do that? If not, his claim is fraudulent and he stands a self-convicted charlatan. Or let him go to the cemetery and, standing before the tomb of one who died four days ago, call, "Come forth!" so that the sheeted corpse shall come stalking from its sepulchre to meet him. Can he do that? If not, what becomes of his claim that he is invested with power to work miracles like those of Jesus or even "greater" than his? Let him admit that he has misinterpreted the promise.

As a matter of fact such claimants make a lamentable mistake in placing their emphasis on the healing miracles of Christ. It betrays a dense and culpable ignorance of the whole philosophy of his Gospel, in seeming to intimate that the body is the important part of man and that his chief

end is to avoid or cure the ills that human flesh is heir to. But what shall it profit a man to be physically comfortable and lose his higher life? In all the world there is no such picture of utter, sordid, ignorant, sensual selfishness as that of the man or woman who is perpetually dwelling on his or her own physical aches and pains, thinking of nothing better than how to be happy with an aching tooth or how to get the better of rheumatism or dyspepsia. This for an immortal man, made in the likeness of God! The true ratio is on this wise: The importance of the body is to that of the immortal soul as time is to eternity; or, The science of physical therapeutics is to the preaching of the Gospel as comfort for three-score-years-and-ten is to unending bliss.

But what, then, is the reference in this great promise? What did Christ mean when he said that his disciples should do greater works than his?

His promise opens up such vistas of glorious possibility that one wonders how anybody, even the most ignorant, could

ever have supposed that he referred to the mere curing of physical ills.

The reference is to spiritual power; that is, the power of bringing souls to God. As this was the supreme work of Jesus, so did he transmit or, so to speak, deputize it to his disciples; and in doing so he conferred an immeasurable honor upon them.

He said to his Father, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them" (John 17:18); and to them he said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). He informs us elsewhere that he was sent into the world to seek and to save the lost. This, therefore, is the commission of his disciples: to seek and save; that is, to bring sinners back to God.

Are we fully warranted in affirming that this power was conferred upon the disciples, and that in its exercise they were able not only to perform the works of Jesus, but greater works than his? We are, and the proofs are at hand.

The results of the work of Jesus during his lifetime were comparatively meagre, as

we have seen; nor is this to be wondered at, since his ministry was confined to a strip of territory on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean not much larger than the state of Vermont, and since the thirty years of his earthly life were but a small arc of that great circle of history in which the campaign for the conquest of the world was to be carried on. His was new teaching, which encountered bitter opposition from the start. Even willing disciples were foolish and slow of heart to believe it.

Even after his resurrection there were only five hundred believers assembled in Galilee to hear his great missionary command, and these, so far as we are aware, constituted the principal part of his followers. Ten days afterward, when a multitude was assembled in an open court in Jerusalem, Peter preached to them with such power that three thousand were gathered into the church in a single day; that is, about six times as many as had been converted during the thirty years of the earthly life of Jesus. He had laid the foundation, and Peter, in the exercise of

deputized power from him, was thus, by greater works, building upon it.

A little later, under the preaching of Philip the Evangelist in the city of Samaria, other multitudes were converted, souls springing up like willows by the water courses. And such "greater works" have been going on ever since. At the death of John Wesley there were eighty thousand in the Methodist church to pay tribute to his comparatively brief but splendid work. And what shall we say more? What of Whitefield and Moody and other evangelists and their countless prisoners of hope?

> "Each breeze that sweeps the ocean,
> Brings tidings from afar,
> Of nations in commotion,
> Prepared for Zion's war;
> While sinners now confessing,
> The Gospel call obey
> And seek a Saviour's blessing
> A nation in a day."

Nor is there anything strange in this when we pause to consider the reason which Jesus gives for it. "The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works

than these shall ye do," he said, "because I go unto my Father." The key of the passage is that word *because*. It means that we are reaping what he sowed; that we are building on his foundation; that our success is evermore measured by the faithfulness with which we witness for him.

In returning to his Father to resume the glory which he had with him before the world was, he took his place upon a throne from which he superintends the stupendous whole. On his vesture and on his thigh is a name written, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." No more is he hemmed in by the narrow limitations of human life. He plans the campaign and will continue to direct it until his triumphant return to reign from the river unto the ends of the earth.

He sits like Moses on the hilltop at Rephidim, his hands uplifted while the battle goes on; and on the field below we raise a standard bearing the legend of the altar there, Jehovah Nissi, "The Lord our Banner!" From him who occupies that throne radiate all the currents of influence,

and in him meet all the confluent streams of history. Great power have the disciples of Jesus, yea, power beyond their largest dreams; and all their power is from him.

At Pentecost the promise of the Holy Ghost began to be fulfilled, for the Spirit came with a sound as of a rushing mighty wind. In accounting for the supernatural phenomena of that wonderful day Peter said: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.' This Jesus, whom God hath raised up, being by the right hand of God exalted, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." So came the baptism of fire and power, a baptism which was to continue until the final reign of Jesus. In that power the disciples went forth as fishers of men to perform greater works than those which Jesus had wrought during his ministry, and their successors shall continue to do such wonderful works until the world is restored to God.

We are living in this dispensation of the

Spirit, and it is obviously of the utmost importance that we should understand the meaning of it. The Holy Ghost is not an impersonal something or other, an affluence or an effluence or an influence or anything of the kind. He is the third Person of the Godhead. His personality is as real as that of the Father or that of the Son. He is the Executive of this dispensation, under whose authority and control we, as followers of Christ, meet all our responsibilities and discharge all our duties.

It is nearly nineteen hundred years since Jesus advised his disciples that they were to act henceforth under this direction, and there are still twelve hundred millions of people in the world who have never heard his Gospel. Nor can the church expect to realize its best possibilities so long as its ministers and members fail to recognize the leadership of the Spirit and the fact that they themselves, in order to meet their responsibilities under the great commission, must be baptized with fire and power, must be made conscious partners in the transcendent work of the Spirit of God.

XXIV

THE SHADOWS FLEE

IT was very early in the morning when the women set out for Joseph's garden. The night that still lingered on the eastern hills had its counterpart in the doubts that oppressed their souls. But as there is one twilight of the morning and another of the evening, so there are two kinds of doubt: one that darkens into night and another that "shines brighter and brighter into the perfect day." Wait a little and you shall see these women, whose steps are now so heavy with grief, running to tell the other disciples that Jesus, "who was dead, liveth and is alive forevermore!"

There are three shadows that haunt our pathway — like the three fabled Daughters of Night whose mission was to trouble the children of men — and they all take their flight before the Easter Sun.

The first is Doubt. But let there be no

mistake here; many who call themselves mere doubters or "honest doubters" are hopeless unbelievers, because their doors are closed against all evidence of truth. Honest doubt is so painful to the doubter that he leaves no stone unturned to solve it. Plato said, "God is truth, and light is his shadow." Let us rather say, God is truth and the shadow is our own shadow, which is only there when we turn our backs upon him. We stand in our own light, refusing to take God at his word. Were we translucent — holy as he is holy, "honest as the day" — the truth would cast no shadow, because it would shine through and through us. It is the photosphere which surrounds and radiates from God. It was the reasonable willingness of Thomas Bilney to see and believe in God that dissipated his bewildering doubts and inspired the song,

"Eternal Light! Eternal Light!
How pure the soul must be,
When, placed within Thy searching sight,
It shrinks not but, with calm delight,
Can live and look on Thee!"

The second of the shadows is Fear of Death. The average man is not only afraid of death, he is afraid even to think of it. The Moslems say, "The black camel kneels at every door." The Black Camel! The King of Terrors!

Thus do we characterize the gracious ordinance that summons us from time to eternity. So natural and universal is this fear that we are not surprised to find Christ himself — who was "very man of very man" — trembling as he put the purple cup of the world's sin to his lips, and crying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" But "the sting of death is sin." In the case of Christ it was the consciousness of the burden of the world's sin resting upon him. And he died that we might never die! He rose that we might live forever. The Father hid his face from him that he might never need to hide it from us. "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

This is why, as John Wesley said, "our people die well." In a ministry of more than forty years I have never seen a Christian die otherwise than in calm confidence or in triumphant faith. Again and again have I observed the kindling light of heaven in filming eyes and heard the murmur of fever-parched lips: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!"

The third of the shadows is Adversity, including all the ills that human flesh is heir to. Pain, sickness, bereavement, loneliness, poverty, and disappointment—these are so real, so manifest, and so heartrending that to characterize them as a mere "belief of mortal mind" is to do violence to common sense. Tell it to the whimperers who have only maladies of the imagination, but never to one who has lumbago or a granulated eyelid, nor to a mother with an ailing baby in her arms. But whatever our sorrows may be, they are alleviated by the hope which radiates from the open

grave in Joseph's garden. "This light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and external weight of glory." Here is the discipline of life, the chiselling of the marble, the fire that burnisheth the gold of character, the climbing of the rough road to endless felicity; as it is written, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

How long will the shadows last? "Until the daybreak." Shall we, then, wait for heaven? It is for us to say. We may, if we choose, begin our heaven here and now. Faith is the secret of a happy life. For those whose lives are hid with Christ in God, life is but an upward journey into light, and death the dawn of an eternal day.

The great gates will presently open before us. Farewell, sin, sorrow, doubt, and death! Welcome the dawn shining more and more unto the perfect day! How unimportant, then, will seem the shadows that once fell across our pathway, save as they helped us upward to the

heights of God! "Arise, shine; for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!"

. . . . . .

Our little book on the Resurrection of Christ is ended. The day is breaking off yonder on the heights of Bethshemesh. Behold how the sun flames in the forehead of the morning sky!

Oh, glorious Sun!

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